

## ANNUAL SICKNESS ABSENCE REPORT

### 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report gives an update on the Councils approach to managing sickness absence and provides trend data for the 2018/19 financial year.

### 2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Sickness absence continues to be a key performance indicator for the Council.

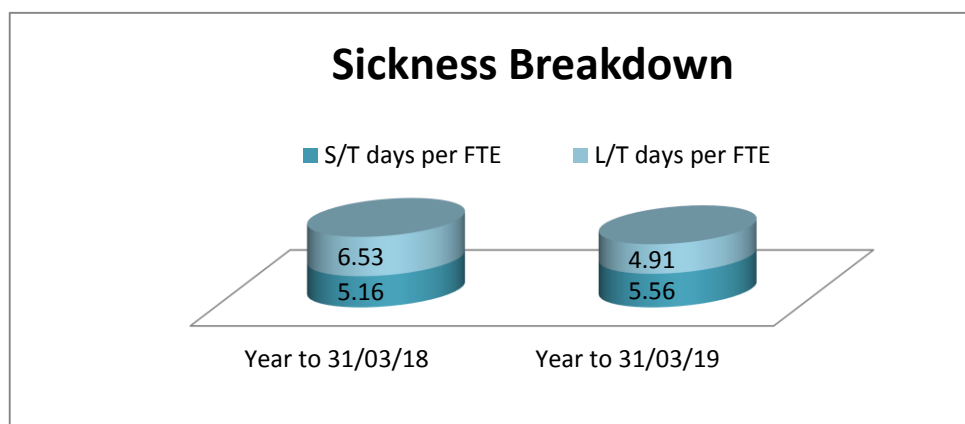
### 3. SICKNESS ABSENCE DATA

3.1 The table below compares full time equivalent (FTE) working days lost due to sickness for the year to March 18 compared to the year to March 19 and the percentage of working time lost.

Years	Year to 31/03/18	Year to 31/03/19
Total days lost	8876	8157
Average days per FTE	11.69	10.47
% of working time lost	4.50%	4.02%

3.2 The absence figure has reduced by 1.22 days per FTE and 0.48% less working days lost compared to last year.

3.3 Short and long term sickness absence days per FTE:



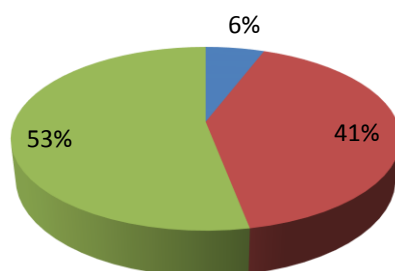
3.4 Long term absence (sickness of 20 days or more) remains high with 85% of the cases in the last year being within our operational service areas. Commonly in long term sickness cases, it can take a protracted length of time to receive correct diagnosis and action, with potential for extended recuperation. There are currently 28 employees off long term sick accounting for a total of 475 days open long term sickness (as opposed to 32 people and over 2000 days last year).

3.5 There has been 1 ill health retirement this year, and 2 Case Review dismissals. This compares to 2 ill health retirements and 2 Case Review dismissals the previous year.

3.6 The chart below shows a breakdown of sickness days over the year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 19:

## Breakdown of sickness days

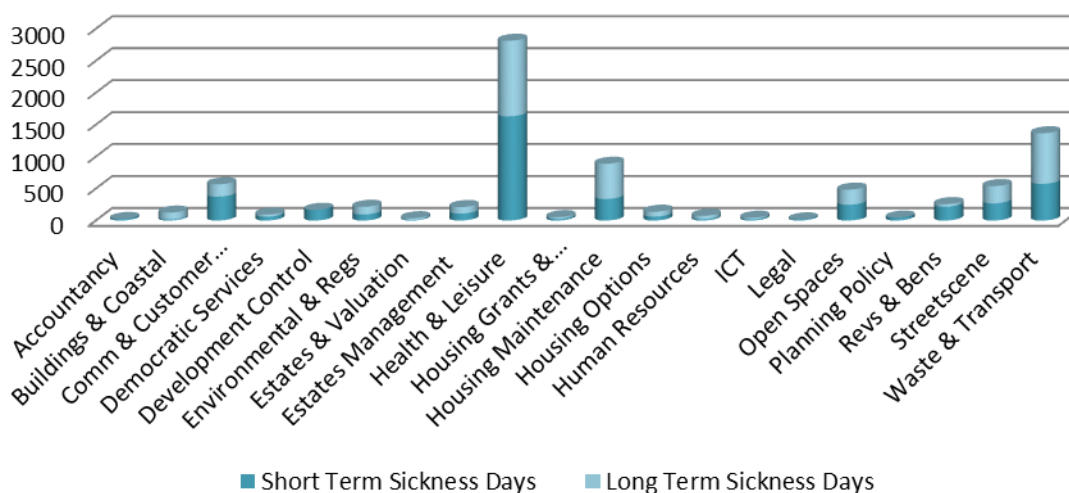
■ Open long term days ■ Other long term days ■ Short term days



3.7 As at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 those off long term, 21 are on full pay, 1 is on half pay plus statutory sick pay, 6 are on statutory sick pay.

3.8 The graph below details the sickness days per Service area as at 31/03/2019:

## Days sick by service area



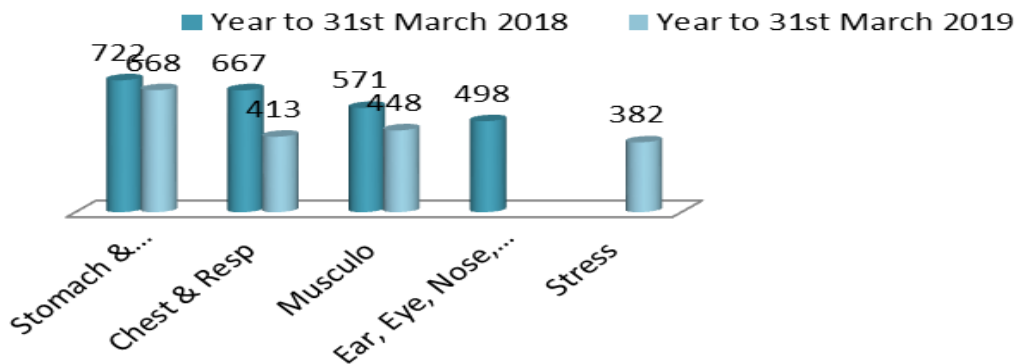
3.9 The main reasons overall for sickness absence across the Council can be broken down as detailed below.

Reasons for sickness	Year to 31/03/2018 (days lost)	Year to 31/03/2019 (days lost)
Musculo skeletal	1660	1052
Stress/Depression	1262	812
Chest & respiratory	1121	321
Stomach & Kidney	1042	514

Compared across the last two years, the table highlights that musculo skeletal remains the highest reason for sickness. Stress and Depression has decreased by 450 days but has risen into one of the top four reasons for short term sickness.

3.10 Whilst return to work meetings are carried out for all periods of sickness absence, and more formal meetings are held with those that hit a trigger for short and long term sickness, it is easier to keep track of individual long term sickness matters. Short Term trends are not generally identified outside of formal meetings. To assist with this, data is provided on overall short term sickness trends. The graph below shows a breakdown of the highest reason by number of days for Short Term absence:

## Short term sickness reason comparison



3.11 The average cost of sickness absence per day is £92.

3.12 The April 2019 CIPD Health & Wellbeing at Work Survey details an average of 4.4 days sickness absence per FTE compared with 8.8 days average per FTE in the public sector. It states that larger organisations (with over 1000 employees) have significantly higher sickness than those with less than 500 employees. It also details mental health is the 1<sup>st</sup> highest cause of long term sickness and the 4<sup>th</sup> highest cause for short term sickness across sectors.

#### 4. SICKNESS ABSENCE ACTION PLAN

4.1 Management information is key to effective sickness absence management. It is a key objective of all Service Managers to ensure sickness is managed effectively. Online sickness absence reports and trend data are available for all managers.

4.2 A robust Sickness Absence procedure is in place, which includes return to work meetings and short & long term triggers. The HR Advisory Team advise and assist managers through the Sickness Absence procedure. The Team continue to run the Absence Management 'Brief Bite' training session for supervisors and managers at least twice a year to ensure that those new to managing at the Council or those requiring a refresher are fully trained in the Council's formal process.

4.3 The Council is also continuing to take a number of preventative steps in relation to sickness absence:

4.3.1 We offer the Employee Assistance Programme 'Workplace Wellness' through Right Management. It offers a free 24-hour telephone helpline, 365 days a year and covers issues as diverse as emotional/personal, legal, financial, marital/family, work/career and drugs/alcohol. If recommended, there may be a further opportunity to discuss problems face-to-face with a trained counsellor. This service is regularly promoted and fully funded by the Council.

4.3.2 We have continued to run resilience workshops, and have additionally run training on embracing, managing and implementing change linked to smarter working across all services for employees and managers, we have received excellent feedback on these.

4.3.3 Flu jabs – After successful take up last year, 41 flu jab vouchers have been given to our operational workforce (and Environmental Health Officers due to the nature of their work) free of charge. These will continue to be offered for 2019/20.

4.3.4 Health checks – Another two full days of Health checks (36 checks) have been arranged to take place in spring and are fully subscribed to. These remain free of charge to those on

band 4 or below working over 18.5 hours per week, charged to the relevant business unit, to all others there was a £35 charge. The checks included: Height, Weight, BMI, Body Fat, Diabetes, Total Cholesterol, HDL Cholesterol, Blood Pressure, ECG, and are undertaken by a qualified nurse.

4.4 Mental Health and Employee wellbeing continues to be a high priority area for assisting employees; the supportive measures available are:

- We have hosted Mental Health First Aider training, and now have 12 fully trained mental health first aiders across the council, with contact details on Forestnet.
- Additionally we have used MIND to run a series of 2 hour manager awareness sessions on mental health.
- During 2019/20 we will be running Dignity at Work training in June and July.
- We are also offering Mindfulness workshops, open to all employees to attend.

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are direct financial implications related to this report.

## **6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

## **7. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

## **8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 There are no equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

## **9. EMT COMMENTS**

9.1 This report shows a pleasing continuation of trend.

The sickness figures by service are actual days lost to sickness. It should be noted that Leisure staff account for 40% of the total number of employees, therefore sickness figures are expected to reflect this.

9.2 Pleased to see the continuing emphasis on managing our mental health. We are very supportive of the commitment to 12 Mental Health First Aiders across the Council.

9.3 The new HR Hub now provides managers with up to date reports and dashboard highlights to assist with timely management and support of sickness cases. These will assist managers and make improvements and greater benefits.

## **10. EMPLOYEE FORUM AND EMPLOYEE SIDE COMMENTS**

### **Employee Forum Comments:**

10.1 Do the figures show a whole year? I ask because the months in the title are different (October and March) – suggestion: change 'Year to' to '12 months' possibly?

10.2 Section 3.9 states stress and depression is now in the top 4 reasons for short term sickness but this is not included in the chart in 3.10?

10.3 In Section 4.3.3 do you know how many staff overall were given flu jabs?

**Employee Side Comments:**

10.4 No employee side comments have been received.

**11. RESPONSE TO EMPLOYEE/EMPLOYEE SIDE FEEDBACK**

11.1 All figures are over a year. Report has been updated to reflect 'year to' throughout.

11.2 The chart in 3.10 has been updated to reflect this.

11.3 41 flu jab vouchers were given out to the workforce this year.

**12. RECOMMENDATIONS**

12.1 That the HR Committee notes the sickness levels for 2018/19, and supports the action plan.

**For Further Information:**

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