

Audit Commission Report – Managing Absence in Tees Valley & Durham Councils

Strengths

Information Systems & Intelligence

- Consistent and comprehensive reports;
- Flexible approach to information sharing, reports, verbal and blogs;
- Good guidance on possible actions to reduce absence;
- In house HR department;
- Strong agreement on aims of the Authority and consistency of understanding.

Policies and Procedures

- Clear policies and procedures;
- All managers had undertaken training;
- Good message coming across on policy and procedure aimed at keeping people at work;
- Strong messages coming from corporate HR.

Targets

- Good general awareness of level of sickness and targets;
- Core time removed to provide a more relaxed environment for hospital and other appointments.

Accountability

- Flexibility in returning to work;
- Clear roles and responsibilities and well understood guidance;
- Comprehensive guidance on support;
- Good support from Corporate HR.

Work Environment

- Generally felt to be good with the exception of 'Greencroft' – a new site with new build, white noise issues;
- Lancaster employee assistance scheme was perceived to be good;
- One department was using letters to congratulate staff for 100% attendance.

Areas for Improvement

- A standardised approach regarding data provided to managers on trends;
- Addressing the use of paper records between remote office sites and corporate HR.
- Policies not applied consistently across the Council.
- Target setting needed to be challenging, yet realistic.
- Ensure that managers and staff are aware of the role of the Occupational Health Service.
- Job evaluation & internal restructures can affect sickness rates – suitable support is required.