

22 October 2019

**Scrutiny Review of Attendance Management – Update
on Progress against Recommendations**

Report of John Hewitt, Corporate Director of Resources

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide an update to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB) with regard to:
 - (a) progress made against the recommendations from the 2015 Scrutiny review of attendance management;
 - (a) management support / interventions, training and other relevant updates.

Executive summary

- 2 A focus on improving attendance and the robust and consistent management of absence continues to be a high priority for the council. Progress updates continue to be reported to Corporate Management Team on attendance management performance and identifying hot spot areas and associated interventions.
- 3 Average days lost per FTE in the rolling year to 30 June 2019, stands at 10.17 days. This is an improvement when compared to the previous quarter at 10.25 days and also when compared to the same period last year at 11.10 days. It should also be noted, 59.13% of current employees have had no absences in the rolling year period to 30 June 2019.
- 4 In addition to the advice and support provided to services in managing individual cases, HR works closely with Corporate Directors and Heads of Service to determine actions required. HR will continue to engage with Service Management Teams such as facilitating case review groups where appropriate, delivering practical workshop sessions to managers and supervisors.

- 5 Workforce health and wellbeing is a strategic priority for the council, agreed by Cabinet, and as set out in the Director of Public Health Annual report 2018. The council has actively contributed to the wider public health priorities across County Durham with forward setting priorities, in terms of mental health at scale, promoting positive behaviours, high quality drug and alcohol services and a healthy workforce.

Recommendation

- 6 The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board is asked to:
 - (a) note the progress update on the recommendations of the Scrutiny review of attendance management;
 - (b) note the work to date on improving attendance within the council by way of robust management in accordance with the Attendance Management Policy / HR interventions and associated actions.

Background

- 7 Over the last eight years, sickness absence / attendance management has been the subject of two light touch reviews by COSMBs predecessor committee (Corporate Issues and Overview Scrutiny Committee (CIOSC)). The last update on progress against recommendations was considered in April 2017.
- 8 Following discussion of the Q3 2018/19 Performance Management report at the COSMB meeting of 18 March 2019, Members raised concerns around the level of sickness absence and requested more information around attendance management as well as an update on the outstanding recommendations.
- 9 It was agreed that COSMB would include the topic within the 2019/20 work programme and for Officers to provide an update report to Members in the autumn.

Action Plan Updates

- 10 Further progress has been made against the initial actions identified by CIOSC. An updated action plan is attached at Appendix 2 which details the last information provided to Committee on 24 April 2017 but also highlights the updated progress.
- 11 A summary of the updated position on the outstanding actions is detailed below:
 - (a) **Long Term Sickness Absence (LTSA)** – absences over 6 months are reviewed on a monthly basis by HR and reported to the Head of People and Talent Management to monitor actions and ensure they are progressed appropriately. As at September 2019, there are 21 LTSA cases between 6-12 months. As an organisation of this size, it is pleasing to report a small proportion of cases are between a period of 6-12 months. This indicates that cases are being progressed robustly each month.
 - (b) **Mandatory Training** – the Head of People and Talent Management has progressed a number of initiatives in order to begin to build a fit for purpose workforce development approach for the council. Cross council comprehensive learning and development programmes (formerly the Durham Manager Programme) to meet mandatory, corporate priorities and developmental training requirements were launched in May 2019.

- (c) **Council Wide Employee Survey** – the last employee survey was undertaken in 2017. The Valuing our Employees Strategy (2019-2022) recommends the council undertakes a further survey to ask specific questions in terms of feeling engaged, aware of council priorities, values and behaviours, inspire programme, learning and development and health and wellbeing.

However, a recent employee health and wellbeing survey took place in May 2019 which was associated with the Better Health at Work Gold Award; details of which will be reported in Q2 2019/20 Performance Management report.

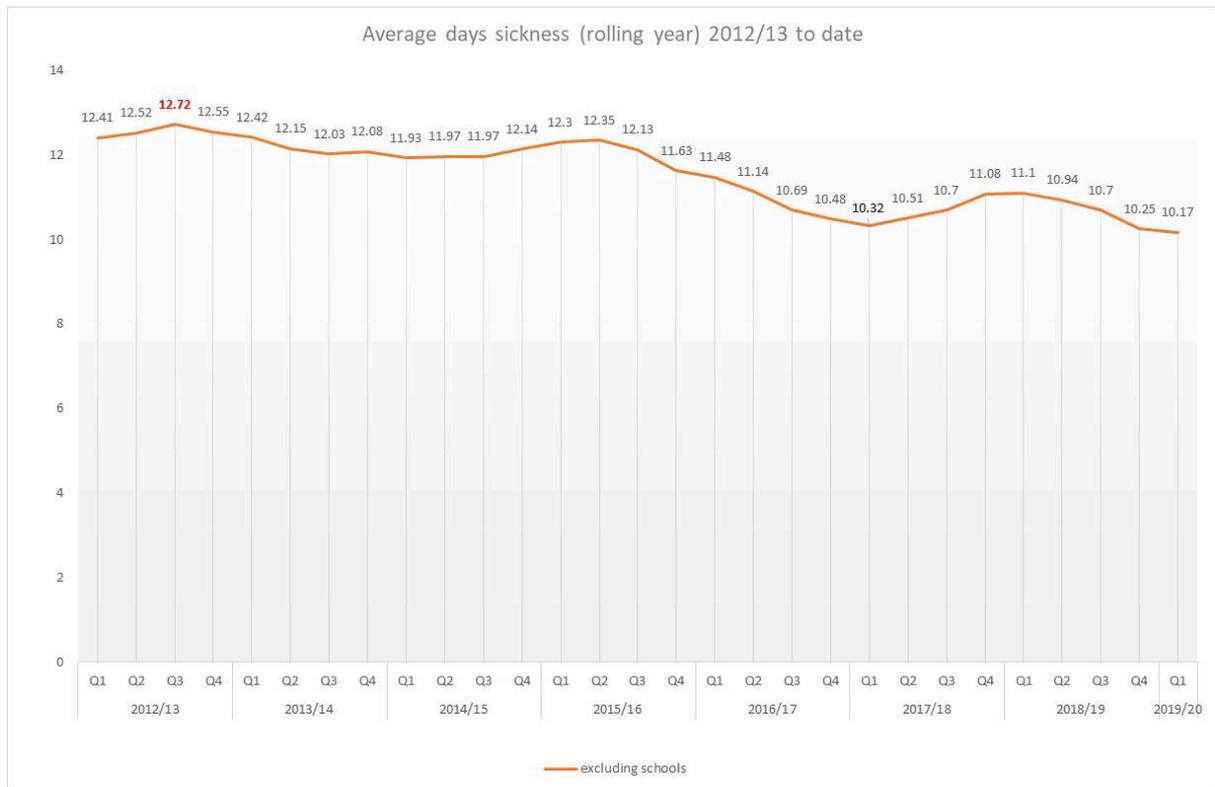
- (d) **Better Health at Work Award** – the council reviewed the employee health and wellbeing offer in 2016 and committed to achieving the better health at work award, starting with the bronze award status. The council is currently in the process of assessment for the gold award status, having achieved silver in November 2018. The council also signed the employer ‘time to change’ pledge in 2018 and this enhances the offer and commitment to employees.

Following an initial employee health and wellbeing survey in 2017, a second employee health and wellbeing engagement survey has been undertaken in 2019/20 as a requirement of the gold award application and will enable further interventions and initiatives to be undertaken in the year ahead. This will again form the basis of future workforce development activities. Activities and initiatives throughout 2018/19 have been based on the outcomes of the initial better health at work award employee engagement survey which were primarily associated with mental health/stress, physical activity, nutrition, alcohol consumption and musculoskeletal disorders.

- (e) **Automated Trigger Points / Business Alerts** – the Attendance Management Policy has been reviewed twice since the last update in 2017, in which all trigger points were reviewed as part of that process. As attendance management performance is continuing to improve, the trigger points will remain as they are, and will continue to be monitored as part of the Attendance Management Policy review cycle.

Current Absence Management Information

- 12 The graph below identifies the average number of days lost per FTE in the rolling year (excluding schools) per quarter since Q1 2012/13 to Q1 2019/20.



- 13 It is highly encouraging to see absence has continued to reduce for four quarters with absence now down to 10.17 days per FTE against a target of 11.20 days. It is important however, that absence continues to be a major priority for the council.

Outstanding Return to Work (RTW) Interviews

- 14 In line with the council's Attendance Management Policy, managers are required to undertake a RTW interview following every period of sickness absence, regardless of the duration, within 3 days of the return.
- 15 A total of 134 RTW interviews are outstanding (2%). HR will continue to target these service areas to stress the relevance of undertaking RTW interviews and provide support in relation to the quality of RTW discussions.
- 16 However, it should be noted that the overall total number of completed remains high at 5,970 (98%) (as at 18 September 2019).

Long Term Sickness Absence (LTSA)

- 17 The following table summarises the number of employees on long term sickness absence between 6-12 months and 12+ months from October 2018 to date:

Date	6-12 months	12+ months	Overall Total
October 2018	16	5	21
November 2018	17	2	19
January 2019	31	1	32
February 2019	18	3	21
March 2019	19	1	20
April 2019	22	0	22
May 2019	21	0	21
June 2019	25	0	25
July 2019	17	0	17
August 2019	23	0	23
September 2019	21	0	21

- 18 As an organisation of this size, it is pleasing to report a small proportion of cases are between 6-12 months (21 employees). This equates to 0.25% of employees, based on a headcount of 8,105 (excluding schools as at Q1 2019/20). There are no long term sick cases that are 12 months plus.
- 19 The management of long-term sickness cases over 6 months has been, and will continue to be, subject to careful monitoring by the Head of People and Talent Management on a monthly basis to ensure appropriate and timely action in accordance with the Attendance Management Policy.

Short Term Sickness Absence (STSA)

- 20 The following table shows the number of employees with 5 or more absences at Q1 2019/20 (in the rolling year):

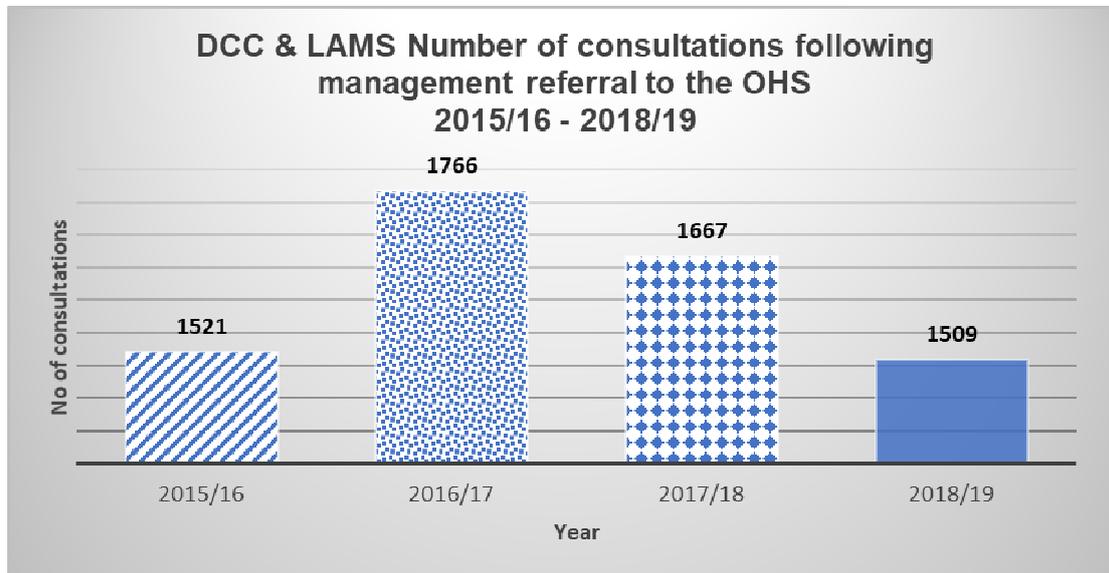
Short Term Absences	Q3 2018/19	Q4 2018/19	Q1 2019/20
DCC Total	68	71	88

- 21 HR continues to work closely with relevant service managers to develop an action plan for each of these cases, which will include mandatory target setting where there is no underlying and ongoing medical condition, and timely progression to hearings where required.

Management Referrals

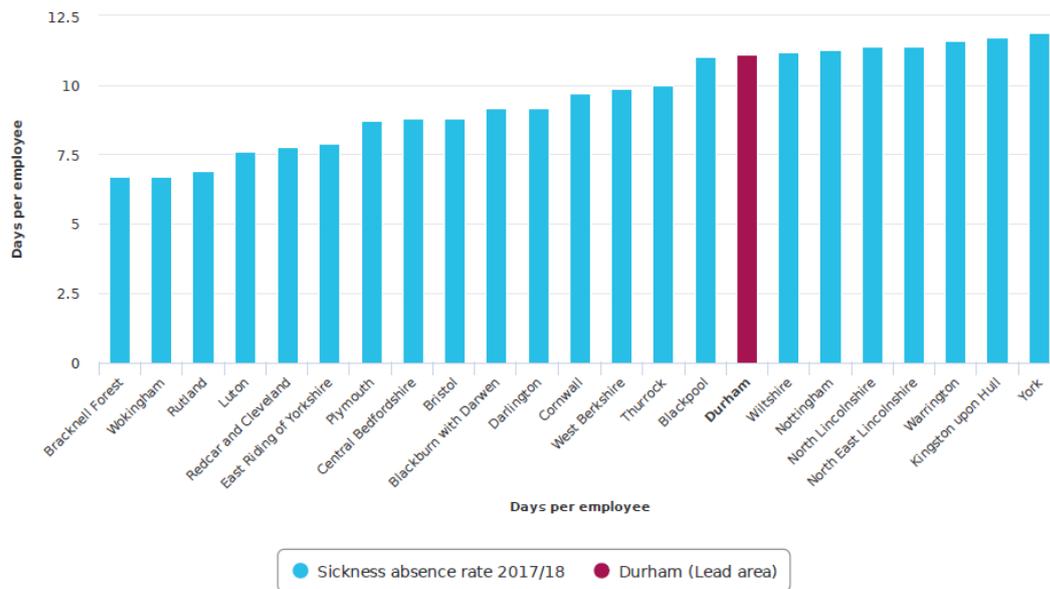
- 22 Managers refer employees to the Occupational Health Service (OHS) for advice relating to LTSA, STSA and re-referrals in accordance with the Attendance Management Policy. The OHS also encourages managers to engage with employees at an early stage and take proactive actions including referral of employees where their health may be affecting their performance or where their work may be affecting their health. This is categorised by the OHS as a management concern.

- 23 During 2018/19, a total of 1509 consultations were carried out by the OHS as a direct result of management referrals. The chart below shows the number of consultations' following management referrals over the past 4 years. This shows an increase of 16% from 2015/16 to 2016/17 which has been followed by a gradual decrease each year.



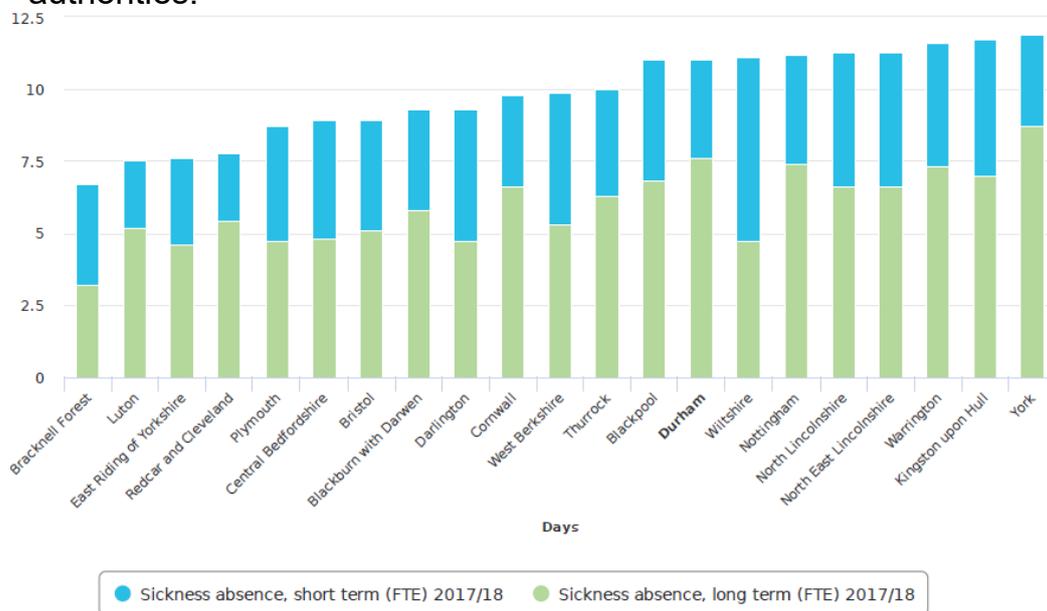
Local Government Workforce Survey 2017/18

- 24 The council contributed to the Local Government Association [2017/18 Workforce Survey](#) which provides information on key elements of the workforce within local authorities in England.
- 25 All Heads of Human Resources were asked to complete an online survey between February and April 2019. The final overall response rate achieved was 50% (174 councils responded out of 350 authorities).
- 26 It should also be noted that whilst all local authorities continue to monitor sickness absence, some have adopted their own measures which suit their needs and management systems.
- 27 Additionally, the characteristics of specific organisations can significantly impact on its absence levels e.g. where frontline, manual operations are delivered in-house. It is therefore difficult to make comparisons, and as a result, the benchmarking data should be treated with caution when comparing Durham County Council's sickness performance.
- 28 The chart below displays 2017/18 performance for sickness absence FTE days per employee for Durham in comparison to all English unitary authorities.



29 Upper Tier Councils reported a median of 9.2 days lost per FTE in 2017/18. The biggest cause of days lost to sickness in 2017/18 was stress, depression, anxiety, mental health and fatigue (26.7%), followed by other musculo-skeletal problems (14.9%) and infections (9.6%).

30 The chart below details 2017/18 short term sickness absence per FTE and long-term sickness absence per FTE for all English unitary authorities:



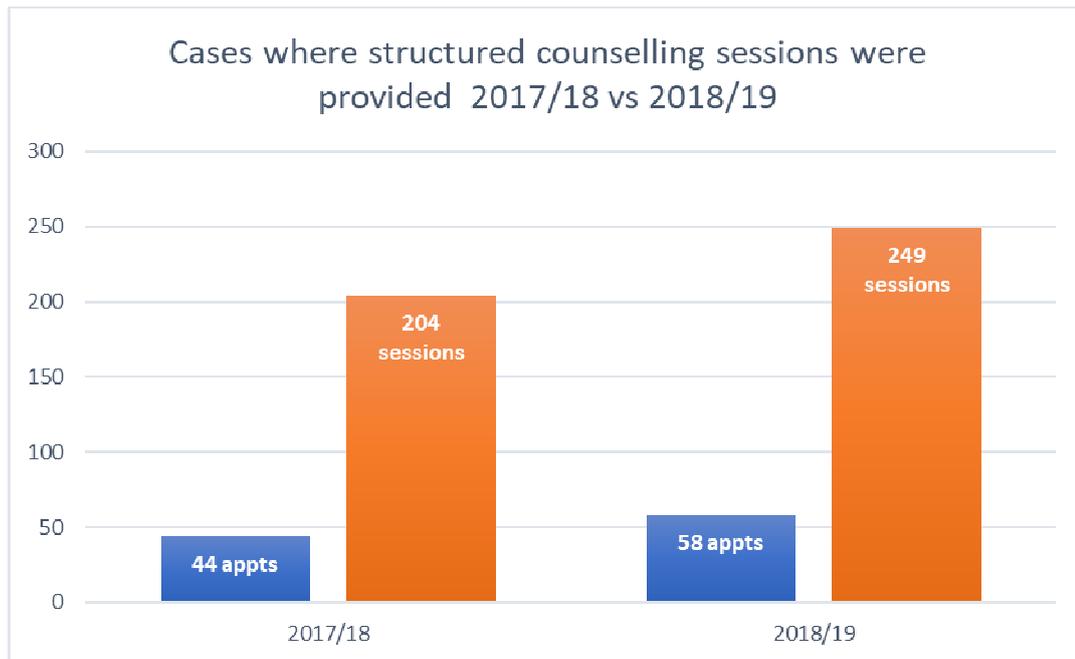
Review of HR Policy and Procedures

- 31 A number of key HR policies and procedures have recently been reviewed. The council's compassionate leave and bereavement policies have been revised to allow up to 5 working days to deal with an emergency e.g. domestic situation, serious illness of family member or to make arrangement for unexpected childcare problems. In terms of bereavement leave, up to 5 working days for the death of a dependant has been agreed and up to 3 working days for the death of a close relative.
- 32 The Attendance Management Policy was reviewed (including trigger points) and implemented in January 2019 with a view to simplifying the process and links to the council's overall strategy on promoting the health and wellbeing of employees. The revised policy now also features the council's commitment to the dying to work charter.
- 33 A summary below outlines the main changes and other work underway to support the new approaches to managing and improving attendance:
- (a) updated policy with core principles and clear responsibilities on the employer and employee;
 - (b) shortened simplified policy;
 - (c) separate managers guidance document;
 - (d) further clarity on managing cases of both long and short-term absence for an employee;
 - (e) how to deal with annual leave during sickness;
 - (f) the ability to bring a long-term sickness case to an end earlier if the individual agrees through pay in lieu of notice (PILON) and no notice to be worked;
 - (g) improved AMI and RTW forms and work underway to digitise these documents as part of ResourceLink developments.

Management Support / Interventions

- 34 A substantial amount of data is available to service managers in relation to managing attendance. As well as the Attendance Management Framework and quarterly workforce information performance reports, all managers up to and including Tier 5, have access to real time sickness data through the council's business intelligence (BI) system to support the administration and performance management of the attendance management framework across their area of responsibility.

- 35 Additionally, prompts are provided via ResourceLink BAM alerts to advise where RTW interviews and AMIs are required due to being up and coming or overdue. There are also BAM alerts issued that inform managers of open-ended absences (to ensure the return to work date is added).
- 36 HR Business Leads and the HR Advice and Support Team within People and Talent Management, provide a significant amount of day to day support to managers in relation to attendance management, as well as facilitating case review groups where appropriate, delivering practical workshop sessions to managers and supervisors and identifying hotspot areas and associated proactive interventions.
- 37 Service areas with the highest levels of sickness absence across the council have been identified with HR teams providing dedicated support to ensure required actions and associated interventions are put in place. It is important to continue this work with managers and continue to proactively target further hotspot areas.
- 38 A significant amount of work has been undertaken across three service areas. One within Adult & Health Services, Children & Young People's Service and Regeneration and Local Services over the past 12 months; working closely with Heads of Service and Strategic Managers.
- 39 For example, specifically to one service area within Adult and Health Services, the number of days lost per FTE (in comparison to September 2018 - September 2019) has a reduction of 9.38 days per FTE.
- 40 Following the promotion of the employee assistance programme (EAP) during 2018/19, there has been 1,626 access hits to EAP online services. Calls have increased by 64% in relation to access to counselling and various advisory services such as financial, bereavement, legal, health and relationship matters.
- 41 Furthermore, there has been a 32% increase from 2017/18 in cases where structured counselling sessions was provided following initial referral:



- 42 Other support mechanisms are also currently in place e.g. monthly sickness surgeries with Strategic Managers and their management teams, HR drop in clinics, HR presentations / briefing sessions and workshops with Strategic and Tier 5 Managers.
- 43 Additionally, all leaders and managers have been set an annual corporate objective that focuses on managing attendance and wellbeing as part of the PDR process.

Further Improvements

- 44 When an employee reports that they are not attending work as a result of sickness, this provides the first opportunity for a manager to discuss alternatives to remaining on sick leave e.g. although the employee may be unable to attend work, could they work from home / work a shorter day / work reduced hours or undertake different duties. This approach has been adopted successfully within some service areas but will generally be a cultural shift for the organisation and is supported by the council's new ways of working initiatives.
- 45 The RTW interview is a critical starting point for challenging short-term absence. Rather than simply recording the return to work, managers should use this to further highlight and discuss levels of short-term absence and consider options to support attendance moving forward. Employees should also be reminded during the RTW interview about requirements of the Attendance Management Policy and the potential consequences of repeated short-term absences and failing to meet the mandatory targets.

- 46 Quality Audits have been undertaken and data indicates that whilst short-term absences are in the main being managed, in some cases the management is not as robust as it should be i.e. target setting and progression to hearing stage.
- 47 Open conversations about mental health and wellbeing, and the support available through the council are being encouraged by managers through team meetings, one to ones and PDRs.

HR Actions

- 48 In view of the above matters that have been highlighted, the following actions have been agreed and are currently underway:
- (a) continued HR analysis of short-term absences to ensure progress through consistent and more robust management of such cases;
 - (b) in addition to policy changes and training with regard to changing the way we work, the current culture in relation to the management of attendance will continue to be challenged in the day to day HR advice and support provided. This will include encouragement of open conversations, consideration of alternatives to absence and support in relation to mental health and wellbeing;
 - (c) a refocus on HR led drop in sessions / to support the use of BI with managers, challenge the culture of absence management and target specific cases through individual action plans;
 - (d) the Head of People and Talent Management to continue to review all absences over 6 months on a monthly basis to ensure they are progressed appropriately;
 - (e) HR Business Leads to work with service areas to address the number of outstanding RTW interviews.

Employee Training

- 49 The 2019/20 Corporate Learning and Development programme for leaders / managers and all employees are based on mandatory and corporate learning and development priorities.
- 50 The aim of the programme is to ensure that mandatory training requirements are undertaken together with training on corporate priorities to support skills development, transformation and culture change.
- 51 Detailed below is an update specifically on mental health training intervention:

- **Mental Health Awareness for Managers** – this course is delivered by County Durham Wellbeing for Life. Since November 2018 this training has been rolled out to EMT, tier 4 and 5 managers. This is a mandatory course for all managers and a further 36 sessions have been scheduled from September 2019 to March 2020. This training is currently being considered for core employees;
- **Mental Health First Aid Training** – 102 employees have currently undertaken this training and a further 4 sessions will take place from July to November 2019;
- **Time for Change Champion Training** – 89 Time for Change Champions have been trained to date. The role of a Time to Change Champion encourages conversations about mental health, and spot early signs and symptoms of mental ill health;

Health Advocate Training – 49 Health Advocates have been trained to date. Health advocates play a vital role in supporting people in the workplace to make healthy choices and improve their health;

- **Connect 5 Resilience Pilot to Stress Training** – training was held in February 2019 for dedicated experts across service areas who can deliver resilience training to the workforce. The pilot is now concluded, which will now be rolled out more widely throughout 2019.
- **E-Learning courses** - are available to all employees to support initiatives for mental wellbeing such as mental health for life, mindfulness and zero suicide.

- 52 Specifically, for Leaders and Managers, there are mandatory E-Learning courses on recognising and managing stress in the workplace and attendance management as well as a one-day training course for managing people and performance.
- 53 All Strategic Managers and Tier 5 Managers are in the process of undertaking mandatory training on Managing People – New Approaches, which includes cultural changes in how we manage employees, including attendance.
- 54 There is also mandatory training on Health & Safety responsibilities for managers. This course has been delivered by the Health and Safety Team since November 2018 rolled out to Extended Management Team, tier 4 and 5 managers. An E-Learning course will be developed to be rolled out to all other remaining managers.

Occupational Health Service

- 55 The council currently provides a number of employee support services e.g. occupational health, counselling services, flexible working options and a number of general Health and Wellbeing events. These events will not only raise awareness and provide valuable information and support around some key 'health and wellbeing' themes such as time to change, breastfeeding awareness, Stoptober, they will also highlight the range of resources and facilities available to employees and managers through the council's Occupational Health Service, HR and our benefits providers.
- 56 The Occupational Health Service launched a new online referral system in March 2019 which enables managers to refer their employees for advice on employee sickness absence or other work-related concerns, replacing all previous paper referral methods. This online portal streamlines and simplifies the process for managers and the Occupational Health Service, enabling managers to access a live dashboard for tracking referral receipt, nurse appointments and accessing reports.
- 57 A two-year physiotherapy pilot project commenced within Direct Services in 2018 and is based on early intervention to improve muscular-skeletal health and reduce and/or remove avoidable absences associated with such conditions. To date, 193 employees have attended appointments with the Occupational Health Service for routine statutory health surveillance.

Other considerations

- 58 Whilst, the option of employees reporting to an external health adviser (rather than their manager) has been raised for consideration, initial observations from Officers was that this takes away management responsibility at a time we are looking for managers to be more proactive and accountable in relation to how they manage employees, including their attendance.
- 59 By way of background, this option was also considered by the council a number of years ago and was not subsequently pursued at that time based on there being no evidence that an absence management service is successful in reducing sickness absence.
- 60 The Senior Occupational Health Physician also advised that employees should not be medicalised by a nurse in the first instance as the majority of absences are lower level and do not require such attention.

- 61 However, the option of employees reporting their absence to an external health adviser has been further considered, with meetings held in December 2018 with a potential company who offer such a service. A quotation of £260,775 pa (based on a contract length of 3 years) was received.
- 62 Following discussions with Corporate Management Team, it was agreed that an absence management service should not be explored further.

Background papers

- Further progress against recommendations – CIOSC – April 2017
- Progress against recommendations - CIOSC - July 2016
- Sickness absence review – CIOSC – November 2015 and Cabinet – December 2015
- Sickness absence review – CIOSC – June 2012

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Appendix 1: Implications

Finance

Absence levels can have an impact upon budgets where short term cover needs to be put in place.

Staffing

Absence levels can have an impact upon staff wellbeing.

Risk

High levels of absence can be a significant risk to service delivery.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

None

Climate Change

None

Accommodation

None

Crime and Disorder

None

Human Rights

None

Procurement

None

Disability Issues

None

Consultation

None

Legal Implications

None

Appendix 2: Scrutiny Review Recommendations – Progress Update

Review Recommendation	Progress Report of Action taken to implement recommendation	Responsibility	Timescale
<p>Recommendation 1 The Working Group recommends the adoption of the draft Attendance Management Policy.</p>	<p>Previously Completed in April 2017 Update</p>		
<p>Recommendation 2 The Working Group recommends that the Council continues to target long-term sickness absence.</p>	<p>Long-term sickness absence continues to be targeted as a priority area. The new Attendance Management Policy states: <i>'Before the employee reaches 6 months of continuous or aggregated absence within the rolling year, the manager must consider whether the absence can be sustained. At that point, the employee will be advised that any further assessment of their position will be made via a final stage interview. The manager must re-refer the employee to the OHS and have received their report prior to the final stage interview'.</i></p> <p>In 2015/16 56 employees were dismissed as a result of long term sickness absence. Key information is provided to Service Management Teams on the management of long-term sickness absence together with exception reporting to both service management teams and CMT for employees who have been absent longer than 12 months to ensure that the appropriate action is being taken.</p> <p>Update April 2017: A wide range of data is available to Service Management Teams on long term sickness absence through both the detailed quarterly attendance management reports and also through a suite of 'real time' sickness analytics via the</p>	<p>Head of People & Talent Management</p>	<p>Ongoing – on a monthly basis</p>

Review Recommendation	Progress Report of Action taken to implement recommendation	Responsibility	Timescale
	<p>Oracle Business Intelligence Tool (update provided below). HR Business Leads continue to work closely with managers to review and analyse data and agree appropriate strategies for intervention. Actions include performance clinics, workshops and manager events and work to ensure quality assurance and compliance with council policy.</p> <p>Long Term Sickness Absence (LTSA) continues to be given priority and targeted. As a result, there have been ongoing year on year increases in LTSA referrals to the OHS. Within the Council there was a 19% increase in the number of management referrals in cases of LTSA during 2015/16, compared to 2014/15. Although 2016/17 data is not complete as yet, it is forecast that there will be a further 11% increase in the number of management referrals made to the OHS as part of the LTSA procedures. Increases have also been noted in Local Authority Maintained Schools, with a 9% increase in 2015/16 and a further 18% increase forecast for 2016/17. This year to date (1 April 2016 – 28 February 2017) the OHS has carried out 465 consultations with employees of the Council following management referrals requesting advice in relation to the LTSA procedures, and a further 197 consultations relating to LA School based employees.</p> <p>Since the launch of the new Attendance Management Policy to date (6 April 2016 – 31 March 2017) a total of 69 employees have had their employment terminated at a Long Term Attendance Management Hearing.</p> <p>Update August 2019: LTSA over 6 months are reviewed on a monthly basis by HR and reported to the Head of People and Talent</p>		

Review Recommendation	Progress Report of Action taken to implement recommendation	Responsibility	Timescale
	<p>Management to ensure they are progressed appropriately. As at September 2019, there are currently 21 LTSA cases between 6-12 months.</p>		
<p>Recommendation 3 The Working Group recommends that upon approval of the draft Attendance Management Policy, compulsory training be given to all DCC managers on the application of the new policy and associated procedures, making the links to such training as stress awareness, manual handling, workstation assessment and annual appraisal awareness; that this is incorporated into the Durham Managers' Programme and that the percentage of managers trained be reported to Scrutiny at appropriate intervals.</p>	<p>The new Attendance Management Policy has been supported by training for managers through an E-Learning course. There are 1,413 managers/supervisors enrolled on the course and since the launch of the policy on 6 April 2016, 703 managers have successfully completed this training as at 6 June 2016.</p> <p>The course is mandatory for all managers/supervisors who are responsible for managing attendance and completion is monitored through a learning management system and on completion of the course, training records are automatically updated on ResourceLink. Reminders were sent to tier 4 managers in June 2016 to ensure any outstanding training is completed by their managers/supervisors. Bespoke sessions have been delivered by the HR Advice and Support Team to Service Management Teams to advise of the main changes to the policy and to identify support and initiatives to manage attendance within individual areas.</p> <p>Face-to-face attendance management training continues to be delivered as part of the Corporate Training Programme. An E-Learning course is also available to managers on recognising and managing stress in the workplace which has been promoted through attendance management groups. 209 managers had completed this training as at 6 June 2016. A requirement of this training is for managers to complete the Health and Safety Executive Line Manager Competency Indicator Tool to identify their own behaviours</p>	<p>Head of People & Talent Management</p>	<p>Complete</p>

Review Recommendation	Progress Report of Action taken to implement recommendation	Responsibility	Timescale
	<p>to help alleviate work related stress. This training provides a timely intervention for managers who have to deal with stress related issues in the workplace.</p> <p>Courses continue to be offered through the Durham Manager programme on health and safety together with softer skills such as dealing with difficult conversations. These courses support managers to deal effectively with employment related matters such as attendance management.</p> <p>Update April 2017: As at 4 April 2017, 85% of managers have successfully completed the Attendance Management training module. HR Business Leads previously provided all Service Management Teams with the details of their managers that had not completed the course for appropriate follow up and a final deadline was set of 31 March 2017.</p> <p>Update August 2019: As at 5 August 2019, 83% of managers have completed the E-Learning Attendance Management training module. HR Business Leads also undertake bespoke attendance management training in service areas. The Corporate Leadership and Management Development Programme was launched in May 2019 which provides a range of skills based courses to support managers to effectively manage their teams, a number of these courses are mandatory including Mental Health Awareness for Managers and Coaching as a Management Style.</p>		

Review Recommendation	Progress Report of Action taken to implement recommendation	Responsibility	Timescale
<p>Recommendation 4 The Working Group recommends that the current automated “reminder triggers” within the My View system be amended to send a reminder to managers after 20 calendar days that a Sickness Absence interview needs to be undertaken in the event that this has not already occurred and the escalation to senior manager e-mail after a further 7 days.</p>	<p>Previously Completed in April 2017 Update</p>		
<p>Recommendation 5 The Working Group recommends that a review of the current OHS referral process be undertaken to include establishing a target for referral into the OHS service of 30 calendar days; an analysis of the impact upon OHS of implementing this target and an immediate referral into OHS for those employees whose absence has been due to mental wellbeing.</p>	<p>Previously Completed in April 2017 Update</p>		
<p>Recommendation 6 The Working Group recommends that staff, managers and Trade Unions be engaged in the examination of suggested changes to the Attendance Management policy arising from this review in respect of My View Sickness Absence Interview reminders and the development of OHS referral targets.</p>	<p>Previously Completed in April 2017 Update</p>		
<p>Recommendation 7 The Working Group recommends that a more comprehensive Council wide staff survey be undertaken to inform organisational development, which would gather staff</p>	<p>An annual internal communications survey is currently undertaken which includes questions on appraisals and training and development. However, options are being explored for a Council wide survey to establish a baseline to identify areas for improvement.</p>	<p>Head of People & Talent Management / Head of Communications</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

Review Recommendation	Progress Report of Action taken to implement recommendation	Responsibility	Timescale
<p>opinions on such issues as Health and wellbeing; attendance management; appraisals; council policy; training and development and organisational culture with Councillors having direct input into the content of the questions via scrutiny.</p>	<p>An action outlined in the ACE and Resources Service plan is to undertake a council wide survey in line with agreed Scrutiny recommendation by September 2016. It is intended that survey information will be circulated to members of the CIOSC for information and comment prior to the council wide survey being undertaken.</p> <p>Update – April 2017: The annual internal communications survey was reviewed in the light of the additional topic areas suggested by Members. As part of this, officers explored best practice advice from other organisations including the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) on surveying staff on mental health and wellbeing.</p> <p>The HSE’s recommended standard methodology includes questions which address many of the issues Members had highlighted. It is a tried and tested methodology, which would potentially allow the council to compare and benchmark its performance against 136 other public sector bodies and staff opinions against those of other organisations and sectors.</p> <p>It was therefore suggested that the council augmented its existing internal communications survey with the HSE’s standard methodology to produce the more comprehensive staff survey requested by Members. Scrutiny Members were consulted on this at the end of January and no objections were received.</p> <p>The augmented survey referred to as the ‘Working Well’ survey was therefore conducted from 28</p>		

Review Recommendation	Progress Report of Action taken to implement recommendation	Responsibility	Timescale
	<p>February – 21 March, principally online but with hard copies distributed to employees who do not have access to computers. The survey responses will be analysed using the HSE’s analytic tool to produce organisational and service grouping related results which will enable further analysis of specific work-related causes of stress and implementation of appropriate interventions. There have been in excess of 3700 (40%) survey responses, with good representative information from all service groupings This response rate is significantly in excess of previous surveys.</p> <p>An action plan will then be developed by the Employee Mental Health and Wellbeing Working Group which comprises of service group representatives.</p> <p>Update August 2019: The initial employee health and wellbeing survey, a requirement of the Better Health at Work Award criteria, was undertaken in 2017. A repeated employee health and wellbeing survey was undertaken again in May 2019 as a requirement of gold award status, details of which will be reported in Q2 2019/20 Performance Management report. The Valuing our Employees Strategy (2019-2022) recommends the council undertakes a further survey to ask specific questions in terms of feeling engaged, aware of council priorities, values and behaviours, inspire programme, learning and development and health and wellbeing which will be agreed by Corporate Management Team later in autumn. It is envisaged that the HSE’s stress management standards ‘Working Well’ employee survey will be repeated in 2020 following an intital survey undertaken in April 2017. This survey will compliment the findings of the employee</p>		

Review Recommendation	Progress Report of Action taken to implement recommendation	Responsibility	Timescale
	health and wellbeing surveys which have been undertaken as part of the Better Health at Work award criteria.		
<p>Recommendation 8 The Working Group recommends that that the Council review its current provision for the promotion of “Better Health at Work” and examine the potential to develop a more proactive and targeted approach to health and wellbeing promotion amongst its workforce.</p>	<p>A mental health and wellbeing task and finish group, represented by all service groupings, was formed in 2015 to evaluate the current interventions and assess:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if they enable the Council to evidence compliance with current legal requirements, national best practice and research; • if they are adequate and effective in relation to reducing sickness absence and current foreseeable mental health and wellbeing risk factors. <p>The current mental wellbeing intranet pages have been redesigned and were launched in quarter 4 of 2015/16. These pages provide improved guidance and information to managers and staff on mental wellbeing management, support, advice and guidance. They will also link all other council procedures and guidance which directly or indirectly impact on mental wellbeing.</p> <p>New mental health awareness training for managers has also been launched via E-Learning, which is being promoted through attendance management groups. This will be targeted at managers to raise understanding and awareness of mental wellbeing issues and how to manage them effectively.</p> <p>Update – April 2017 The employee health and wellbeing focus group, chaired by Interim Director Public Health has continued to meet and has completed its initial objective in relation to design and</p>	Head of Corporate Finance & HR	Ongoing

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	<p>delivery of an employee health and wellbeing survey. Further work will be undertaken via the group in terms of addressing more broader health and wellbeing challenges across the Council.</p> <p>The Council is proceeding with the registering for the Better Health at Work Award. The Better Health at Work Award recognises the efforts of employers who promote healthy lifestyles and consider the health of their employees. This award will recognise the achievements of the Council and help move forward in a structured and supported way. The next step is an assessment of Council activity against the bronze award criteria. The assessment identifies areas for taking work forward and building on existing activity. This includes the provision of healthy food choices, addressing employee welfare, monitoring sickness absence rates, promoting mental wellbeing and the delivery of health-related campaigns.</p> <p>Some of this work has already started for example, a standalone wellbeing strategy is being developed and healthier options in the canteen are being offered. It is envisaged that the Council will move quickly through bronze and progress to silver. It is essential that progress is corporately driven and all elements of the Council are engaged and contribute. Once the Council achieves the standards for the bronze award, which is through an assessment, the award would be granted.</p> <p>Update August 2019: The council reviewed the employee health and wellbeing offer in 2016 and committed to achieving the better health at work award, starting with the bronze award status. The</p>		

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	<p>council is currently in the process of assessment for the gold award status, having achieved silver in November 2018. As a result of the award requirements there has been a range of employee health and wellbeing initiatives introduced associated with mental health, physical activity, nutrition, no smoking, alcohol, cancer awareness, to name a few. The council also signed the employer 'time to change' pledge in 2018 and this enhances the offer and commitment to employees. To gauge the requirements of employees, there has been two employee health and wellbeing engagement surveys undertaken in 2017 and 2019 which have been utilised to focus resources. Interventions are also targeted proactively by utilising public health demographic data in terms of the key health risks and issues for the workforce, with the majority of employees living within county durham.</p> <p>The second employee health and wellbeing engagement survey has been undertaken in May 2019 as a requirement of the gold award application and will enable further interventions and initiatives to be undertaken in the year ahead. This will again form the basis of future workforce development activities. Activities and initiatives throughout 2018/19 have been based on the outcomes of the initial better health at work award employee engagement survey which were primarily associated with mental health/stress, physical activity, nutrition, alcohol consumption and musculoskeletal disorders.</p>		

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<p>Recommendation 9 The Working Group recommends that following implementation of the Attendance Management Policy and in the event that attendance management performance has not shown improvement following sustained monitoring, a review of all trigger points within the policy be undertaken.</p>	<p>The new Attendance Management Policy was implemented on 6 April 2016 therefore, this review will be due to be undertaken when the Quarter 2 performance information is available as at 30 September 2016.</p> <p>Update August 2019: The Attendance Management Policy has been reviewed twice since the last update in 2017, in which all trigger points were reviewed as part of that process. As attendance management performance is continuing to improve, the trigger points will remain as they are, and will continue to be monitored as part of the Attendance Management Policy review cycle.</p>	<p>Head of People & Talent Management</p>	<p>Complete</p>