

Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee

11 July 2016



Scrutiny review of Attendance Management – Update on progress against recommendations

Joint Report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive and Paul Darby, Interim Corporate Director of Resources

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of this report is to update members of the Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee on progress made against the recommendations from the Scrutiny review of Attendance Management.

Background

- 2 At the Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 27th March 2014, during consideration of the Quarter 3 Performance Management report, reference was made to performance in respect of sickness absence targets not being met within Durham County Council. At this time questions were raised regarding the sickness absence management policy, the process of recording and managing sickness absence, the role of line managers in reducing sickness levels and the training available to staff. There was also interest in the link between appraisal completion and absence levels.
- 3 A Task and Finish Group of Corporate Issues OSC Members was set up to look at Attendance Management, and evidence was gathered over a series of 5 meetings. A presentation was given to the group on 28 September 2015 which highlighted key findings from the review and at which members of the group agreed a series of recommendations.
- 4 Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee commented on and agreed the review report at the meeting on 17 November 2015 and a copy of that report is attached at Appendix 2 for members' information. This report was also presented to and agreed by Cabinet on 16th December 2015.

Recommendations from the review

- 5 The review made the following recommendations:
 1. The Working Group recommends the adoption of the draft Attendance Management Policy subject to those comments identified within paragraph 37 of this review report being considered for inclusion therein.

2. The Working Group recommends that the Council continues to target long-term sickness absence as the key cause of below target sickness absence performance.
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.
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.
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.
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.
7. The Working Group recommends that a more comprehensive Council-wide staff survey be undertaken to inform organisational development, which would gather staff 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.
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.
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.
10. It is further recommended that a systematic review of the report and progress made against recommendations should be undertaken after consideration of this report by Cabinet, within six months.

Systematic Review

- 6 The pro-forma attached at Appendix 3 provides an update on the recommendations of the final report.

Recommendations

- 7 The Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to:-
- (a) Note the update on the recommendations of the Scrutiny review of Attendance Management.

Background papers

Scrutiny Review of Attendance Management report

Contacts:

Jenny Haworth, Head of Planning and Performance, Assistant Chief Executive's - Tel: 03000 268 071

Jeff Garfoot, Head of Corporate Finance and HR, Resources – Tel. 03000 261946

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance - None

Staffing - None

Risk - None

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty - None

Accommodation - None

Crime and Disorder - None

Human Rights - None

Consultation - None

Procurement - None

Disability Issues – None

Legal Implications - None