

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REVIEW – Attendance Management

Review of recommendations considered by CIOSC 17 November 2015 and Cabinet 16th December 2016

Review Recommendation	Progress Report of Action taken to implement recommendation	Resib'ty	Timescale
<p>Recommendation 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.</p>	<p>The following information was sent to Extended Management Team and Tier 4 Managers on 6 April 2016 to advise of the implementation of the Attendance Management Policy:</p> <p>‘The Sickness Absence Policy has been reviewed and is now called the Attendance Management Policy and focusses on rehabilitation to support attendance at work. The main changes to the policy include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early intervention from Occupational Health • Shorter timescales for arranging Attendance Management Interviews (previously Sickness Absence Interviews) • Revised procedure for managing short-term absences with no underlying medical condition which includes mandatory target setting and hearings where sanctions may be issued • Long term absence first stage interview to be held within 4 weeks • Consistent approach introduced for phased returns to work <p>The new Attendance Management Policy together with Managers Guidance and supporting documentation can be found on the intranet under the following link:</p> <p>http://intranet/Pages/PoliciesandProceduresDetails.aspx?ItemId=3495</p> <p>The policy will be published more widely to employees via a news item on the front page of the intranet tomorrow together with an article in Buzz next week.</p> <p>I should be grateful if you can advise your teams of the new Attendance Management Policy through team meetings etc. and ensure that your managers and employees familiarise themselves with their responsibilities.</p>	<p>Head of Corporate Finance and HR</p>	<p>Complete</p>

	<p>A mandatory e-learning course to support managers/supervisors to manage attendance under the new policy is available and is to be completed by 31 May 2016. There is a link to e-learning under 'Other Stuff' on the front page of the intranet. Once logged in, the Attendance Management course can be found under the 'Corporate Courses' category. Can Tier 4 managers please ensure that all managers/supervisors who manage attendance complete the course accordingly.</p> <p>Please contact Joanna Coppillie or your HR Business Lead if you wish to discuss further'.</p> <p>The policy has also been publicised to employees through the following corporate communication mechanisms as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News item on the front page of the intranet – 7 April 2016 • Buzz Magazine – 14 April 2016 • Employee Update – 18 May 2016 • Payslip message – 30 June 2016 		
<p>Recommendation 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.</p>	<p>Long-term sickness absence continues to be targeted as a priority area.</p> <p>The new Attendance Management Policy states:</p> <p>'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'.</p> <p>In 2015/16 56 employees were dismissed as a result of long term sickness absence.</p>	<p>Head of Corporate Finance and HR</p>	<p>On-going</p>

	<p>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>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 and that this is incorporated into the Durham Managers' Programme. 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 1413 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. 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 will be sent to tier 4 managers in June 2016 to ensure any outstanding training is completed by their managers/supervisors.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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 have 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 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</p>	<p>Head of Corporate Finance and HR</p>	<p>On-going</p>

	dealing with difficult conversations. These courses support managers to deal effectively with employment related matters such as attendance management.		
<p>Recommendation 4</p> <p>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>A reminder alert has been added to the suite of alerts to advise the manager at 20 calendar days that an Attendance Management Interview is still outstanding.</p> <p>The first escalation message to senior manager has been brought forward to 37 days (as well as the existing 44 day reminder).</p>	Head of Financial Services and HR	Complete
<p>Recommendation 5</p> <p>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>Referral Target to OHS of 30 days</p> <p>The new Attendance Management Policy requires staff on long term sickness absence to undergo a First Stage Attendance Management Interview with their manager at c. 2 weeks of absence. This is consistent with good practice and has an evidence base for effectiveness in reducing subsequent time away from work [NICE, 2015; NICE 2009]. OHS referral should follow where no plan for return to work is established after this initial encounter. Consequently the impact on the OHS of a stricter implementation of existing policy would result in an increased referral rate to the OHS.</p> <p>It is hoped that this increase in demand for OHS advice will be accommodated within existing resources.</p> <p>Immediate referral of all absences attributed to mental health issues</p> <p>This approach would require a change to the current Attendance Management Policy, and the following points relate to reasons why this may not be a priority.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Line managers are already encouraged to provide employees on sickness absence attributed to mental health issues to make contact with the DCC sponsored Employee Assistance 	Head of Corporate Finance and HR	Complete

	<p>Programme (24h telephone helpline)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There may be potential discrimination issues in partial treatment of a particular category of sickness absence (although the intention, from the employer perspective, would be 'good'). • Work has been undertaken to further understand the reasons behind absences attributed to mental ill health. In only a minority of cases are these recorded as work related, with other issues such as bereavement cited. This may attenuate the value of immediate referral to the OHS, where local arrangements for workplace adjustments during periods of disrupted work-life balance may be most effective. • There is no evidence that such early medical intervention for mental health issues is any more effective in reducing long term absence than for any other reason for absence. As such a more general approach of ensuring manager compliance with the policy and achieving the 2 week referral target of the new AMP, for all categories of absence, is best supported by the evidence for effectiveness. • Immediate referral to the OHS would result in a major increase in OHS referrals and run counter to the current Attendance Management Policy, in that the first stage of attendance management should always involve the line manager. This approach is supported in national evidence based guidance. • It is of note that the OHS already accepts referrals for 'management concern' where advice on the impact of health issues on work is sought even before any associated sickness absence. This is an example of good management and OHS practice and represents c. 30% of all clinical encounters in the OHS. These referrals frequently involve issues relating to mental health. <p>References NICE 2015 https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng13 NICE 2009 https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ph19</p>		
Recommendation 6	A comprehensive consultation exercise took place prior to the	Head of Corporate	Complete

<p>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>introduction of the new Attendance Management Policy.</p>	<p>Finance and HR</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 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 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>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.</p> <p>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>Head of Policy and Communications/Head of Corporate Finance and HR</p>	<p>On-going</p>
<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>Head of Corporate Finance and HR</p>	<p>On-going</p>

	<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>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. 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.</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>Head of Corporate Finance and HR</p>	<p>December 2016</p>