

Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee

21 April 2017

Scrutiny Review of Attendance Management – Update on Progress against Recommendations



Joint Report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Director of Transformation and Partnerships and John Hewitt, Corporate Director 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 27 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 or 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 five 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. This report was also presented to and agreed by Cabinet on 16 December 2015.
- 5 Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a progress report on 11 July 2016. This progress report identified that a number of the actions agreed as part of the review had been completed. A number however required further work and Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee requested that a further report be brought in the new year.

Action Plan Updates

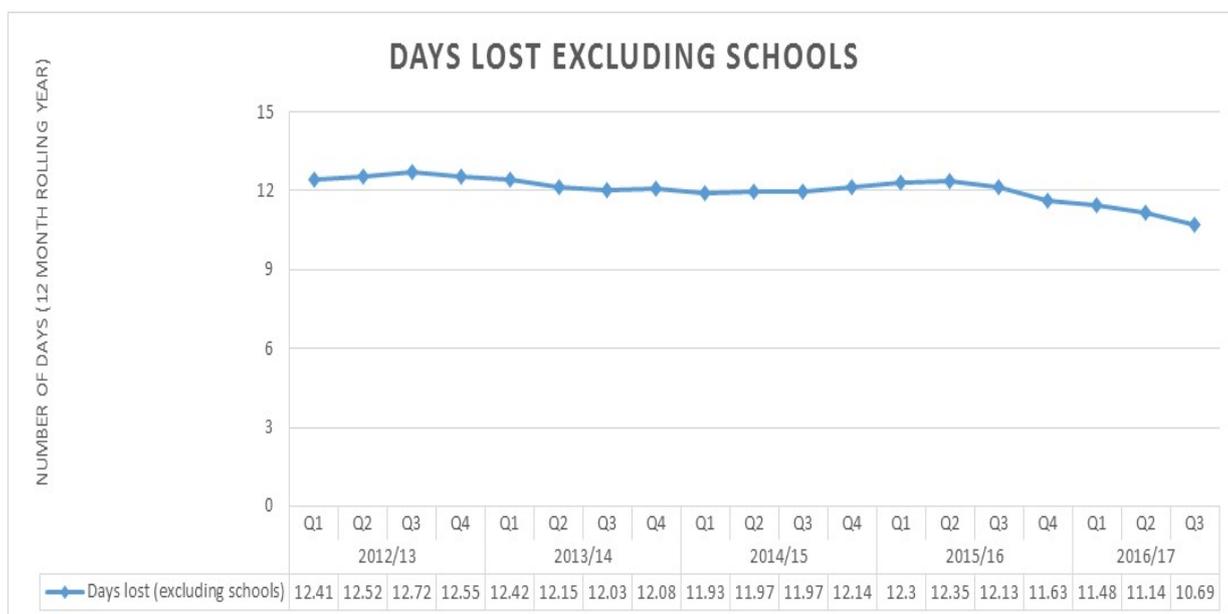
- 6 Further progress has been made against the actions identified by Committee. An updated template is attached at Appendix 2 which details the information provided to Committee on 11 July 2016 but also highlights the updated progress. A summary of the updated position is detailed below:

- (a) **Long Term Sickness Absence (LTSA)** – LTSA continues to be a major focus of support and a major focus of reporting to management teams. It is encouraging that there have been significant increases in management referrals to the Occupational Health Service (OHS) over the last two years in relation to LTSA. There was a 19% increase in 2015/16 with a further 11% increase. There were 56 employees dismissed as a result of LTSA in 2015/16 with a further 69 in 2016/17;
- (b) **Absence Management Training** – training is online with managers trained increasing from 50% at July 2016 to 85% at April 2017. It is recognised that this figure still needs to be improved with e-mails being sent to line managers where training has not been completed;
- (c) **Automated Trigger Points/Business Alerts** – to ensure managers receive improved absence management information the Oracle Business Intelligence system has been developed to allow managers to receive absence management information direct to their PC desktop. The information provided is 'real time' and provides a wide range of information including data on open end absences, return to work interviews, absence rates and absence management interviews. The BAM alerts automatically remind managers of actions required to comply with the Attendance Management Policy, eg when Sickness Absence Interviews are due/overdue etc.
- (d) **Council Wide Staff Survey** – Scrutiny members have had input into the mental health and wellbeing staff survey. The survey was conducted from 28 February to 21 March. In total circa 3,700 (40%) responses have been received which is a significant increase upon the 26% response rate from the previous employee survey, with analysis ongoing;
- (e) **Better Health at Work Award** – the Council will be registering for the Better Health at Work Award which recognises the efforts of employers who promote healthy lifestyles and considers the health of employees.

Current Absence Management Information

- 7 Corporate Issues and Overview Scrutiny Committee received an update on absence data as part of the presentation given on 11 July 2016. The update at that point highlighted that there had been an improvement in absence data in quarters 3 and 4 in 2015/16. Days lost to sickness absence per fte excluding schools staff had reduced to below 12 days in quarter 4 for the first time in over five years.
- 8 The table below identifies the performance per quarter since Quarter 1 in 2012/13 until Quarter 3 in 2016/17.

Days lost to sickness absence – all services not including school staff rolling year				
Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2012/13	12.41	12.52	12.72	12.55
2013/14	12.42	12.15	12.03	12.08
2014/15	11.93	11.97	11.97	12.14
2015/16	12.30	12.35	12.13	11.63
2016/17	11.48	11.14	10.69	



9 It is highly encouraging to see absence has continued to reduce for five quarters with absence now down to 10.69 days per fte as compared to a 2016/17 target of 11.5. It is important however, that absence continues to be a major priority for the organisation.

Recommendations

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

Background papers

Scrutiny Review of Attendance Management report

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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

Accommodation - None

Crime and Disorder - None

Human Rights - None

Consultation - None

Procurement - None

Disability Issues – None

Legal Implications - None