

REPORT TO: Corporate Services Policy and Performance Board
DATE: 7 September 2010
REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Resources
SUBJECT: Sickness Absence
WARDS: Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1. To report on attendance management and interventions introduced to assist managers in effectively managing employee absence.
- 1.2. To report on interventions planned for 2010/11.
- 1.3. To report on average days lost, due to sickness absence, per employee in 2009/10 and 2008/09.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: that the contents of the report be noted.

3.0 ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT AND INTERVENTIONS 2009/10

- 3.1. Over 200 managers (non schools) attended the Attendance Management training in 09/10. The training was positively received and it is now built into the Corporate training Calendar.
- 3.2. The Employee Welfare Advisers have attended Directorate Management Teams over the last twelve months on a monthly basis, to provide information on levels of absence, reasons, and costs and to provide advice on any problem areas.
- 3.3. The Employee Welfare Officers have also worked closely with managers, across the Authority, to reduce sickness absence including the resolution of a number of long term sickness absence cases.
- 3.4. From April 2010 People Manager, on Trent Absence Module, has gone live and Managers now directly input the sickness absence of their staff. All managers attended the relevant training and were made aware that their input has a direct impact on an individual's pay and in information required for statistical returns. Managers now have access to sickness absence electronically and can run reports regarding length of absence and absence patterns which will assist them in managing an employee's attendance.

4.0. INTERVENTIONS PLANNED 2010/11

- 4.1. Refresher training will now be rolled out to schools from September 2010. The Employee Welfare Adviser will deliver the training programme either on an individual school basis or to a cluster of schools. Although this will be a lengthy process it is important that all Headteachers/Managers in schools are trained in attendance management to ensure that they can apply the Managing Absence Policy rigorously and in turn reduce sickness absence.
- 4.2. The Employee Welfare Advisers will continue to attend Directorate Management Teams in the forthcoming financial year to provide information on levels of absence and offer advice/support as required.
- 4.3. In order to build on the support/advice given to managers in 2009/10 monthly HR surgeries will start to be introduced across all directorates, extending the current system operating in Children and Young People's Directorate. Divisional Managers and their managers will attend the surgery with the Employee Welfare Adviser to discuss any current employment issues, including sickness absence. Attendance at the surgeries will increase managers' knowledge and ultimately increase confidence when dealing with staff related issues, including sickness absence.
- 4.4. Further training on managing short term absence will be rolled out to managers via the HR surgeries in 2010/11.

5.0. SICKNESS DATA

- 5.1. The total number of working days lost due to sickness absence, per employee in 2009/10 was 10.21 as compared to 13.50 days in 2008/09. A reduction of 3.31 days per employee. The breakdown for each directorate is set out below:

Directorates	% absence 2008/09	% absence 2009/10
Corporate & Policy	5.26	3.96
Environment	7.06	4.04
Health & Community	6.09	4.67
CYP non schools	4.07	4.33
Primary Schools	3.80	3.06
Secondary Schools	4.18	3.50

- 5.2. Long term sickness absence is included in the overall calculation of working days lost due to sickness. Managers across all directorates are continuing to actively monitor employee absence and with the support of the Employee Welfare Advisers have successfully resolved a number of long term sickness cases throughout 2009/10.
- 5.3. Absences between 1-7 days account for approximately 77% of overall absence. This mirrors national trends. Further training on managing short term absence will be rolled out to managers via the HR surgeries in 2010/11.
- 5.4. The number of working days lost, due to sickness absence, per employee, for the whole year 2009/10 is 10.21 as compared to 13.52 08/09. A reduction of 3.31 days per employee from 2008/09.
- 5.5. The reduction is due to the hard work of both managers and the Employee Welfare Advisers, supporting employees and working together, over the last financial year to address attendance management. This successful partnership will continue during 2010/11 and the focus will now be extended to schools to ensure that the number of days lost due to sickness absence continues to reduce.
- 5.6. In the next two weeks the sickness data for the 1st quarter of 2010/11 will be reported to Management Team.

6.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 As we continue to monitor sickness absence across the Authority the Sickness Absence Policy is currently being reviewed to ensure absence is managed effectively.

7.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 None.

8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

8.1 Children and Young People in Halton

Sickness absence reduces the resource available to the Council to apply to its priorities.

8.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

Sickness absence reduces the resource available to the Council to apply to its priorities.

8.3 A Healthy Halton

Sickness absence reduces the resource available to the Council to apply to its priorities.

8.4 A Safer Halton

Sickness absence reduces the resource available to the Council to apply to its priorities.

8.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

Sickness absence reduces the resource available to the Council to apply to its priorities.

9.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 9.1 Failure to monitor absence levels and trends may lead to increased levels of ill health and appropriate support may not be given to employees. There is a cost to the Council of any sickness absence and this reduces the resource directed to its priorities.

10.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 10.1 It is important that all employees are treated equally and fairly with regard to their sickness absences and within the policies and procedures laid down by the Council.

11.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Failure to address levels of sickness absence will lead to increasing costs for the authority.

12.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act.