

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: WEDNESDAY, 16 NOVEMBER 2011
 title: NWEQ – MANAGING ATTENDANCE AND HEALTH AND WELLBEING SURVEY – AUGUST 2011
 submitted by: PERSONNEL OFFICER
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1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide Members with information relating to management of attendance and health and wellbeing across the region.
- 1.2 To provide Members with an insight into current practices, ideas and solutions, best practice and common ground within Northwest authorities.
- 1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:
 - Council Ambitions – Successful absence management across the authority is crucial to consistent and high quality service delivery, which underpins our corporate ambitions.
 - Community Objectives – Staff are a key resource in delivering the objectives identified in the Community Strategy. Staff absence can only have a detrimental effect on delivery in terms of time and quality and must therefore be minimised.
 - Corporate Priorities - Staff absence could impinge on the Corporate Plan, which is an integral part of the Council's performance management framework and is designed to integrate operational service delivery with our priorities. In addition, absence may result in increased workloads for non-absence staff and further reduce the quality and efficiency of service.
 - Other Considerations – A target absence rate of 7 days was set in the Human Resources Service Plan.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 North West Employers surveyed 41 local authorities across the region with a 75.6% response rate. The analysis of this survey has been collated into the Employer Intelligence Strategy – Managing Attendance and Health & Well-being Survey – August 2011 (Appendix 1).
- 2.2 The data is shared on a confidential basis by all participating authorities with the intention of collaborative working and the sharing of best practice and innovative ideas.

3 ISSUES

- 3.1 The report shows (Fig 1) that, among District Councils, absence rates vary between 6.02 days and 10.86 days with Ribble Valley declaring 6.86 days. This outturn falls below our target of 7 days and maintains our place towards the lower end of the spectrum.

- 3.2 The breakdown of absences between long-term and short-term show that long-term absences (of 4 weeks or more) accounted for a higher percentage of total days lost than short-term in the majority of authorities.
- 3.3 The average of the 26 responses gives a figure of 44.7% for short-term absence and 55.3% for long-term absence. The annual sickness absence report to Personnel Committee in May 2011 showed 36% of absences attributable to short-term absence for our authority in 2010/11, which represented a reduction from 55% in 2009/10, and 64% of absences resulting from long-term absence.
- 3.4 While our figures reflect a broader spread than the regional averages the intelligence report does not indicate and reasons for absence nor whether authorities have been able to utilise the new "Fit Note" to reduce absence.
- 3.5 82% of authorities use external occupational health providers, which is the case for this authority. The majority also show referrals are normally made by line managers or HR, with our normal practice being an initial request to CMT followed by referrals handled by the Personnel team.
- 3.6 There was an even split of authorities who did or did not recognise employees with high or full attendance. This was considered at length when the Bradford Formula was introduced to the authority with the decision taken not to acknowledge this element of the system following feedback from staff and Unison.
- 3.7 Authorities were asked whether they were considering any proposals to reduce service-related periods of sick leave entitlement as laid out in national conditions. The current maximum entitlements to pay during absence from work due to sickness or injury are as follows:
- | | |
|--|---|
| During first year of service | After completing 4 months' service -
1 month's full pay and 2 months' half pay |
| During second year of service | 2 months' full pay and 2 months' half pay |
| During third year of service | 4 months' full pay and 4 months' half pay |
| During fourth and fifth years of service | 5 months' full pay and 5 months' half pay |
| After five years' service | 6 months' full pay and 6 months' half pay |
- 3.8 Whilst the majority of authorities had no definite proposals it should be noted that the North West Employers' Working Group are currently looking at sickness entitlements to investigate possibilities.
- 3.9 The report highlights some successful health and wellbeing practices, a good number of which are already in operation within this authority. The Personnel team have recently produced Head of Service Guidance Notes to the Absence Policy which leads Managers through the process and contains a "Frequently Asked Questions" section to provide further assistance.
- 3.10 It was recognised that, although the current Absence Policy makes reference to alcohol and drugs, the authority does not have a specific Alcohol and Drugs Policy. This will be addressed by the Personnel Section as part of the current review of policies and procedures.

- 3.11 The monthly staff newsletter “Backchat” is used to raise awareness of health and wellbeing topics with notice boards being utilised to support these activities.
- 3.12 The Council’s Health Lifestyles team are on hand to provide specific health checks, such as blood pressure, weight and BMI on a regular basis.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:
 - Resources – Failure to manage sickness absence across the authority will have a detrimental effect on our service delivery and result in increased workloads for non-absent staff covering the duties of absent colleagues. Payment of sick pay represents a cost to the authority in terms of lost time and productivity.
 - Technical, Environmental and Legal – None.
 - Political – None.
 - Reputation – Failure to maintain consistent and high quality service delivery may lead to our reputation being damaged through services becoming less efficient.

5 RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

- 5.1 Note the report.

PERSONNEL OFFICER

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 1 North West Employers – Employer Intelligence Strategy – Managing Attendance and Health & Well-being Survey – August 2011.

For further information please ask for Julie Smith, extension 4409.