



**South
Cambridgeshire
District Council**

Report to:	Employment and Staffing Committee February 2023
Lead Cabinet Member:	Councillor John Williams
Lead Officer:	Jeff Membery- Head of Transformation, HR and Corporate Services

Sickness Absence Q3 2022-23

Executive Summary

1. The Sickness Absence rates (BVPI) for Q3 2022-2023 (see tab A Absence Analysis by Structure) has increased for the Depot and therefore over target particularly due to Infections (including Colds and Flu) – an increase in sickness levels during the winter months for non-office based colleagues is expected and follows previous year's pattern. See point 5, Actions and training taken place for further information as to how we are supporting to reduce this. However the rest of the Council hasn't changed much so remains under target as follows:

- Depot – 3.70 days per FTE (target – 3 days)
- Rest of the Council excluding Depot – 1.62 days per FTE (target 1.95)

The top 3 reasons for long and short term absence combined were:

- Infections (including Cold and Flu)
- Stress, anxiety, and depression
- Cancer

The HR team continue to work closely with Team Managers to ensure prompt action taken to support staff to return to work including promotion of Employee Assistance programme, Occupational health and signposting to further support.

We are continuing to focus on mental wellbeing initiatives, and for employees who are absent from work for mental health reasons, the manager is allocated an HR Advisor or BP. This is to ensure we are offering as much support as possible, at an early stage.

Key Decision

2. No.

Recommendations

3. It is recommended that the Employment and Staffing Committee note this report.

Reasons for Recommendations

4. This information report forms part of the Employment and Staffing Committee framework for monitoring the Council's staffing resource.

Details

Actions/training taken place –

5. Heales Occupational Health provided free flu vaccinations onsite to all Council employees including the Waterbeach depot in October and November 2022.

Health MOT sessions were set up at the depot earlier in the year. A wellbeing survey has been carried out in conjunction with Everyone Health for which high uptake was received; indicating crews were keen to have health MOTs. The Depot annual training in February 2023 will have a focus on nutrition and health with Everyone Health attending to present and provide guidance. They will also be hosting health clinics.

Hand sanitiser and anti-bacterial wipes can be requested via Facilities, particularly now that we are changing over to hot desking at Cambourne Hall.

The Council has recently introduced a Health Cash plan as part of the Vivup benefits it offers to employees. This will help employees financially to claim dental and optician costs and much more, as well 24/7 access to a GP helpline and online consultation.

Links to further information and support have been sent to all colleagues via e-mail, monthly HR Newsletters, raised in Chief Executive's weekly Vlog, and is available on [Insite](#).

Information and support are also being shared at the Depot via manager's and notice boards.

These include:

- Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) – the majority of those using it accessed the self-help workbooks online through Vivup, followed by using the telephone helpline.
- Able Futures - the Access to Work Mental Health Support Service
- Mental Health First Aiders.
- One to one counselling via Vivup (Telephone) and Evolve (Video)
- Wellness Action Plans
- MyMindPal app

Macmillan recently delivered an in-house training session for line managers and HR colleagues so we can support individuals who are affected by cancer.

In addition to the existing Menopause policy, HR have been putting in place further support including awareness training for both managers and colleagues as well as monthly (currently virtual) Menopause Café's. Further information is signposted on [Insite](#) including webinars for those unable to attend the training.

Options

6. This report is for information only.

Implications

7. There are no significant implications.

Staffing

8. The staffing implications are considered as part of this report.

Equality and Diversity

9. All Sickness Absence is managed under the Attendance Management Policy, to ensure it is applied in a fair and consistent manner. Reasonable Adjustments are considered for all employees in accordance with the Equality Act (2010). The Attendance Management Policy has been reviewed for the changes to come into effect from August 2022 and January 2023 and an EQIA is in progress.

Health & Wellbeing

10. We use an external Occupational Health Provider as needed. We offer an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), referred to earlier in this document. This provides employees with support including Counselling and CBT workbooks. DSE assessment information is included in this report.

Alignment with Council Priority Areas

A modern and caring Council

11. Through the Attendance Management Policy, the Council aims to ensure that employees maintain good health and that sickness absence is minimised by offering a safe working environment coupled with flexible working practices, family friendly policies and the positive promotion of employee wellbeing.
12. The HR team have previously reviewed the Attendance Management Policy for changes to come into effect from August 2022 and more recently from January 2023 during the 4 day week trial.

From August 2022

- The 6 month maintenance period has been removed
- 'Informal Attendance Review meetings' have been changed to 'Wellbeing meetings'

From January 2023 during the 4 day week trial

- Wellbeing meetings replace return to work, welfare meetings and informal meetings
- The triggers are removed as we know this can cause anxiety to colleagues.
- Managers are allowed to use discretion with their employees and how they carry out their work. Decisions will be based on individual circumstances, medical information, job role and the impact of the absence/s.

If managers have a cause for concern, there will continue to be a process for a formal meeting to occur and to issue improvement targets where appropriate.

At the end of the trial, absence data and wellbeing information will help to decide whether the new way is working for colleagues and the organisation.

Appendices

Absence analytics package Q3 2022/2023

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