

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO:	Senior Management Team Resources, Staffing Information and Customer Services Portfolio Holder	16th May 2007 22 nd May 2007
AUTHOR/S:	Chief Executive / HR Officer	

SICKNESS ABSENCE APRIL 2006 – MARCH 2007

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to provide analysis of the sickness absence figures for the period 1st April 2006 – 31st March 2007 and to highlight current action and proposed action to further reduce sickness absence levels.

Executive Summary

2. The report provides a benchmarking process across the organisation to measure sickness days as a percentage of available working days. The figure for the whole organisation for 2006/ 07 was 4.27% days taken as sickness absence.
3. It is recommended that SMT and the Portfolio Holder
 - a) note the PI figure for the period 1st April 2006 and 31st March 2007 of 11.15 days per full time equivalent;
 - b) hold all levels of manager to account for the management of sickness absence when the training programme on the revised Management of Sickness Absence policy is complete.

Background

4. The sickness PI for the period 1st April 2006 – 31st March 2007 was 11.15 days per FTE against a target figure of 10.5. The figure is higher than anticipated because of the difference in full time equivalent at the beginning and end of the year. This figure is averaged (taking the FTE from the beginning and end of the year) when calculating the final figure for the year and any fluctuation in the FTE figure will impact on the final PI.
5. Sheltered Housing - During the year a number of people, with long-term health problems, took voluntary redundancy as part of the restructuring process. There have also been on-going issues in the sheltered housing areas contributing to higher than average sickness levels.
Rest of Organisation - During the year there was one death in service. There have been 3 capability dismissals due to ill health and 1 ill health retirement.
6. The HR-Payroll team has had active involvement with the management of 57 cases of sickness absence during 2006/ 07, 21 cases of which involved long term sickness or disability issues.

7. The Council provides an Employee Assistance Helpline, which provides telephone counselling and a face-to-face counselling service in appropriate cases. The Council will pay for up to 6 x 1 hour face to face counselling sessions. A total of 4 employees received face-to-face counselling during the year.
8. A revised Management of Sickness Absence Policy came into effect on 1st April 2007. Many of the changes are to try to address the problem of short-term sickness, (Long-term sickness is 28 or more continuous days sick. Short-term sickness is 27 or less continuous days sickness absence). Trigger points for action are 3 periods in a 4-month period, 2 periods totalling more than 10 days in a rolling 12-month period or any pattern of sickness. Training in the new revised policy and procedures is being provided to all levels of manager and this will be complete during June 2007.
9. Following the initial screening by the Health & Safety Advisor, 9 employees were referred to Occupational Health for Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) screening. These employees will continue to be monitored and all new employees who will be using power tools will be assessed at the pre-employment stage. This should have benefits in reducing sickness absence for this group of employees and potentially reduce insurance claims against the Council for industrial injury.
10. The Council continues to make best use of the Occupational Health service provided through Addenbrookes.

Considerations

11. Across the organisation 4.27% of available working days were lost due to sickness.

The figures by corporate area are as follows:

Area	% of available working days lost due to sickness	Comments
Policy & Performance	2.39	
Finance & Support Services	2.53	
Planning & Sustainable Communities	2.22	
Affordable Homes	7.91	Area had 2 capability dismissals due to ill health and 1 ill health retirement
Health & Environment	4.62	Area had 1 death in service and 1 capability dismissal due to ill health
Chief Executives	2.01	

12. The figures need to be treated with care. During the year there has been a major restructuring of the 1st and 2nd tier resulting in changes in responsibility for the corporate management of sickness. The Corporate Manager – Health & Environment has benchmarked his areas sickness for several years, recording figures for the Environmental Health and Environmental Operations are. He is estimating the split of his figures to be 5% for Environmental Operations and 2.9% for Environmental Health. It is proposed to report these figures to the corporate managers on a quarterly

basis as part of the information to enable them to ensure their managers are managing sickness absence effectively.

13. Sick reasons as a % of the total

	Chief Exes	Dev	Finance	H & E
Back problem	17.2	0.6	5.1	4.8
Chest, respiratory	3.1	1.3	7.6	4.6
Ear, nose, mouth, eye	4.7	5.1	3.8	6.5
Genito-urinary		1.3		1.0
Headaches & migraine	4.7	9.6	7.6	7.3
Heart, blood pressure, circulation	1.6			2.7
Operation & post operative	4.7	3.8	2.5	5.4
Other	9.4	12.1	14.6	8.8
Other muscular-skeletal problems	4.7	6.4	5.7	12.5
Pregnancy related			3.8	
Stomach, liver, kidney, digestion	9.4	18.5	13.9	17.3
Stress/ depression and mental health	10.9	1.9	7.6	9.2
Viral infection	29.7	39.5	27.8	20.0

Categories as per Local Government Employers criteria

14. These figures will be reported by corporate area in the future. The data shows significant differences across departments. There continues to be a sharp difference between levels of reported stress and mental health sickness between Development Services (now mainly Planning & Sustainable Communities) and the other areas. The level of reported headache/ migraine, stomach, liver etc. and viral illness continues to be higher in this area and the reporting of this type of illness can sometimes 'mask' instances of stress as a cause. Work is currently under way to assess the environmental factors contributing to headaches in the area.
15. The HR Manager, HR Officer and Systems Support Officer continue to work with Northgate to improve the information from ResourceLink, the HR-Payroll ICT system to provide better and more timely information to managers. However, the HR Officer continues to have to manipulate data to get it into a format to be effective for managers to use. Reports will be going to line managers on a monthly basis identifying individual sickness patterns for employees in their section, to corporate managers on a quarterly basis and to SMT and the Portfolio Holder on a six monthly basis.

Options

16. There are no options as the report is for information only.

Implications

17.	Financial	Under the Green Book the maximum amount of contractual sick pay after 5 years local government service is 6 months at full pay, 6 months half pay. There are also the financial costs involved in temporary cover in long-term sickness cases to maintain service delivery.
	Legal	The Council has an obligation to make reasonable adjustments to allow a disabled employee to continue working or to join the organisation. Sickness records are a protected category under the Data Protection Act provisions in relation to employee records.
	Staffing	Sickness absence means duties need to be covered or reallocated to ensure continuity of service delivery
	Risk Management	There are minimal levels of risk
	Equal Opportunities	There is currently minimal monitoring from an equal opportunity perspective on sickness absence

Consultations

18. There have been no consultations.

Effect on Annual Priorities and Corporate Objectives

19.	Affordable Homes Customer Service Northstowe and other growth areas Quality, Accessible Services Village Life Sustainability Partnership	Reducing the number of days lost to sickness absence will have an impact on service delivery and achievement of the organisational corporate objectives
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Recommendations

20. It is recommended that SMT and the Portfolio Holder:
- note the PI figure for the period 1st April 2006 and 31st March 2007 of 11.15 days per full time equivalent;
 - hold all levels of manager to account for the management of sickness absence when the training programme on the revised Management of Sickness Absence policy is complete.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

Performance Indicators

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