

# SCRUTINY REPORT

**MEETING:** Overview & Scrutiny Committee

**DATE:** 9 December 2014

**SUBJECT:** Employee Sickness Levels

**REPORT FROM:** Tracy Johnson

**CONTACT OFFICER:** Tracy Johnson

## 1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 This report outlines the latest sickness absence statistics and the actions being taken to contribute to the reduction of the levels of sickness absence.

1.2 Members of Overview & Scrutiny are asked to note the statistics and to consider the range of information they would find useful for reporting at future meetings.

## 2.0 ISSUES

### 2.1 Summary of the Sickness Absence Statistics

2.1.1 At the end of each financial year the Council reports its sickness figures as a best value performance indicator (BV12). The general trend for previous years is as follows:

Year	Average Working Days Lost Per Person
2013/14	9.82
2012/13	9.27
2011/12	9.38
2010/11	10.38

It should be noted that the BV12 figure includes teachers and staff employed by schools. It can be seen that the figure decreased between 2010/11 and 2012/13 but has increased again in 2013/14.

2.1.2 A more detailed breakdown of the sickness statistics for 2013/14 and the first two quarters of 2014/15 can be seen at Appendix 1. The information is broken down into departments and shows the full time equivalent, the full time equivalent days lost and the percentage sickness divided between the departments. Members will note that the departments reflect the previous structure as this is how the information is currently displayed on iTrent.

2.1.3 It can be seen that Adult Care Services has the highest average working days lost per person at 10.6 days in 2013/14 and 13.14 days in quarters 1 and 2 of 2014/15.

2.1.4 **Appendix 2** summarises the reasons for sickness across the Council. The figures show us that the two most common reasons for sickness absence across departments are stress/depression/mental health/fatigue plus back and neck problems/other musculoskeletal problems. In some departments disability related absence is also high.

## 2.2 **Actions taken or being taken to reduce Sickness Absence**

2.2.1 Members will be aware of the work related savings options which were proposed to contribute to the budget cuts. The original proposals included changes to sickness pay which were:

- √ to reduce the overall entitlement to occupational sick pay by 50% (3 months full and 3 months half pay over a 12 month period)
- √ to suspend the payment of occupational sick pay for the first 3 days of each absence for all employees

2.2.2 After lengthy consultation with the trade unions a modified proposal has been put forward as follows:

- √ to retain the 6 months full and 6 months half pay over a rolling 36 month period
- √ to retain the payment of occupational sick pay for the first 3 days of absence

In addition, the trade union has proposed to jointly review the Managing Attendance Guidelines and their implementation during 2015. This proposal has been accepted and a Task & Finish Group will be established.

2.2.3 Many positive actions are being taken to keep the workforce healthy and consequently have a more engaged, higher performing workforce with low levels of sickness. The Council has a 'Bury Healthy Workforce Strategy' which recognises that the success of the Council depends on the health and wellbeing of the workforce. It recognises that a healthy workforce is essential for engaged and satisfied employees, increased productivity and performance and an increased quality of service.

2.2.4 The Strategy identifies three themes:

Bury Healthy Workplace  
Bury Healthy and Active Lifestyle  
Bury Healthy Mind

A number of initiatives and promotions run under the three themes and many of them cover two or even three themes. The Bury Healthy Workforce Strategy Group sets the direction of this.

2.2.5 *Bury Healthy Workplace*

This is the foundation for good health and includes having sound policies and procedures and managerial support in place. The Council also has mentoring and coaching schemes as well as the employee groups (for example the Carers' Group where carers can attend to discuss their own issues and get advice from others). There is a comprehensive training and development programme which

links directly to our 'Bury Behaviours' competency framework. The Council also has a strong employee engagement programme and surveys its employees every year, with a view to hearing their views and carrying out actions which can improve engagement levels.

2.2.6 A key role within our workforce is the Health & Wellbeing Champions. These are members of staff who have jobs with us and have agreed to promote the improvement of health and wellbeing in the workplace. They work closely with the Health Trainers from Public Health in delivering a variety of initiatives.

2.2.7 We have just delivered a flu vaccination programme for employees who work with vulnerable people as well as those who are identified as Priority 1 and 2 on the Business Continuity Plan.

2.2.8 In the New Year we plan to run 2 'MOT' days, one for men and one for women. Here employees will be able to have their cholesterol and BMI checked and will be able to seek advice on health and wellbeing issues from the Health Trainers.

2.2.9 All the information around health and wellbeing initiatives in the organisation can be found on our intranet pages.

#### 2.2.10 *Bury Healthy and Active Lifestyle*

Employees are encouraged to live an active lifestyle in a variety of ways. They are offered discounted membership from our own leisure centres and lunchtime exercise sessions such as pilates are provided and aimed specifically at our employees. We have bicycle stands and showers for anyone who wishes to ride their bike to work.

2.2.11 In addition, the 'I Will If You Will' (IWIYW) campaign is being targeted at our own workforce as well as to the community. This encompasses a variety of events, for example we have encouraged people to hold walking meetings, have held a 'wear your trainers to work week' and back in the summer we encouraged individuals to 'take a summer dip'.

2.2.12 In addition we have visited workplaces and asked individuals to sign a pledge to take up thirty minutes extra exercise a week for ten weeks. We had around 250 people sign up for this.

2.2.13 The 'I Will If You Will' community facing campaign is targeted at women but within the workforce we would also encourage men to become more active.

#### 2.2.14 *Bury Healthy Mind*

In terms of Bury Health Mind we are planning to develop a Mental Health Strategy. We have provided training in how to manage staff who may have mental health issues. We also have a free, confidential counselling service and can offer cognitive behavioural therapy through this service.

2.2.15 Our Training & Development Programme offers two separate courses:

- r Managing Personal Stress
- r Managing the Stress of your Team

2.2.16 The Equality Impact Assessment has, of course, identified that the IWIYW campaign is for women only. As previously stated, in terms of the workforce, men will not be excluded.

### 2.3 **Future Statistics and Analysis Required by Members of Overview and Scrutiny**

2.3.1 Members of Overview and Scrutiny are asked to consider what statistics would be useful for them to look at moving forward.

2.3.2 They are further invited to comment on any of the actions outlined above and to contribute ideas in terms of additional actions.

### 3.0 **CONCLUSION**

The Council will continue to develop initiatives to help keep its workforce healthy. This will be done through the Bury Healthy Workforce Strategy Group. The Strategy itself is due to be refreshed and the Group has a new Chair which is timely.

3.1 The sickness statistics give us a clear indication that sickness levels need to be reduced and the latest best value full year figure we have is for 2013/14 (average 9.82 days per employee). They also give us a comparison between departments and that the most common reasons why people are sick are stress/depression/mental health/fatigue plus back and neck problems/other musculoskeletal problems.

3.2 Both the Council and Unison have committed to review the Managing Attendance Procedure and the delivery of this procedure throughout departments.

3.3 The Council will also continue to introduce initiatives to encourage its workforce to stay healthy and engaged.

3.4 Members of Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to support these actions and contribute ideas.

3.5 They are further asked to consider any future sickness statistics required.

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### **List of Background Papers:**

Appendix 1  
Appendix 2

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