

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CORPORATE RESOURCES & IMPROVEMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

11 JULY 2016

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR OPERATIONAL AND PARTNERSHIP SERVICES

SICKNESS ABSENCE RESEARCH & EVALUATION PROJECT

1. Purpose of Report.

- 1.1 This report provides the Committee with a position statement with regards levels of sickness in the Council for the year 2015/16 and the work/actions undertaken since the WLGA project conducted in 2015.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities

- 2.1 The Making Best Use of Resources is one of the Council's three corporate improvement priorities.

3. Background.

- 3.1 The Council's relative position in the rank order of the 22 Councils in Wales worsened in 2014/15 despite increased efforts in some areas. Annual comparative data is attached as Appendix E. At the time of writing the national statistics for 2015/16 had not been published.
- 3.2 In order to assist in finding alternative ways in which sickness absence may be managed the Corporate Director of Resources accessed funding available from the WLGA and a cross-Wales project was commissioned, led by Neath Port Talbot Borough Council.
- 3.3 The findings of this report were presented to CPA on 23rd November 2015 and Cabinet agreed a number of recommendations put forward.

4. Current situation / proposal.

- 4.1 The report from the WLGA project outlines the findings from the research, and draws conclusions for the consideration of the participants. The report is attached as Appendix A.
- 4.2 The BCBC sickness policy was introduced in 2008 and is attached as Appendix B with the accompanying Managers Guidelines which have been updated following the WLGA project, attached as Appendix C. The arrangements in respect of Absence Management and Occupational Health are detailed in these two documents. All documentation and related support mechanisms for absence

management [e.g. Occupational Health] are being reorganised into “toolkit form” which will also include newly developed FAQs, to enable easy access to all the available information and support for line managers.

- 4.3 Sickness absence is rigorously monitored in a number of ways:
 - 4.3.1 CMB receive a quarterly report and the latest report, for 2015 / 16, is attached at Appendix D
 - 4.3.2 The sickness absence activity is reported to the Local Government Data Unit on an annual basis.
 - 4.3.4 HR send a non-compliance report to business support managers each month. This identifies those employees who have not been dealt with in accordance with the policy. Business Support Managers escalate the issues as deemed appropriate in their Directorate.
 - 4.3.5 Employee Relations Advisors will attend Directorate DMT meetings to discuss sickness issues specific to that Directorate
 - 4.3.6 HR are involved at each formal stage of the process and the trade unions are also involved in the process
 - 4.3.7 Reports have been prepared using the data presented quarterly by Directorate / Service Unit. These reports provide a three year summary and are detailed at Appendix E
 - 4.3.8. Return to Work activity is monitored and Appendix F details:
 - Headcount by Directorate and Service Unit
 - Identifying those which have been missed [not those awaiting a return ie “open absences”]
 - Warnings issued
 - Number of dismissals
- 4.4 Performance management information is now provided by IMASS with some basic information attached as Appendix G. The effectiveness of the contract is currently being reviewed and analysed by HR.
- 4.5 Care First provide us with quarterly management information and the latest report is attached as Appendix H.
- 4.6 BCBC provides face to face training to managers on sickness absence. The face to face course was reviewed following the WLGA project and the revised courses for both short terms sickness and long term sickness began in February 2016. The data on attendees in the year 2015/16 for both courses is attached at Appendix I. Also documented is the activity in 2016/17 to date, together with detail on the number of courses which will run between June and the end of September 2016.
- 4.7 The Research & Evaluation Panel had previously agreed to scrutinise the sickness absence situation in schools separately. However, we are able to provide the incidence of long and short term sickness by school and this is attached as Appendix J.
- 4.8 Internal audit will commence a piece of work in due course to assess whether or not line managers are consistently applying the policy.
- 4.9 Schools are at liberty to adopt our sickness absence policy, procedure, etc. but the Council has no authority to impose this on them. The activity is not monitored by

HR, and the failure to complete RTW is no longer “chased” [with the agreement of the Corporate Director of Children and Family Support Activity in relation to RTW activity is attached at Appendix K.

4.10 Within the parameters of the current policy there have been some amendments to the way sickness absence is managed internally. These include:

4.10.1 All work related stress and mental health cases will be referred to HR in order that “next steps” are appropriately determined

4.10.2 The analysis of the Occupational Health contract has been evaluated and has led to telephone consultations with the Occupational Health Nurse ceasing.

4.10.3 A more formal approach to welfare meetings has been introduced when an employee reports as absent in the long term. A meeting will take place between 21 and 28 days.

4.10.4 Line managers have been instructed to have daily contact with employees who initially report with a short term absence

4.10.5 A further course on “conducting difficult conversations in the context of managing absence” will be offered in parallel with the People Management and Absence Management courses currently on offer.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules.

5.1 There is no effect upon policy framework or procedure rules in this report.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 There are no negative equality implications to this report.

7. Financial Implications.

7.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

8. Recommendation.

8.1 The Committee receives and considers the information provided in this report.

P A Jolley

Corporate Director Operational and Partnership Services

24 JUNE 2016

Contact Officer: Sarah Kingsbury
Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development

Telephone: (01656) 643212

E-mail: sarah.kingsbury@bridgend.gov.uk

Postal Address Human Resources and Organisational Development
Ravens Court Offices
Brewery Lane
CF31 4AP

Background documents

None.