

Staff and Pensions Committee

9 September 2024

Leading Organisational Wellbeing Annual Review 2023/2024

Recommendations

That the Staff and Pension Committee:

1. Endorses the Leading Organisational and Wellbeing Review 2023/2024 as set out at Appendix 1.
2. Considers the performance information in relation to the management of employee sickness absence during 2023/2024 set out in Section 3 and endorses maintaining an overall target of 8 days per FTE (with a +/- 1 day tolerance) for 2024/25.
3. Considers the work in our approach to leading organisational wellbeing and supports the priority actions for 2024/2025 as set out Section 2.11.
4. Endorses sharing a copy of the annual review with Resources and Fire and Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Annual Review attached as Appendix 1 details the work that has taken place over the last 12 months with regards to leading organisational wellbeing and outlines:
 - a) The achievements in 2023/2024.
 - b) The priorities and action plan for 2024/2025 to take forward to support our approach to wellbeing.
 - c) Workforce performance data for 2023/2024, with trend and benchmarking information.
- 1.2 This report pulls out the main themes from the annual review along with some more detailed absence data for consideration by the Committee.

2.0 Leading Organisational Wellbeing; overview:

- 2.1 **Absence** has increased throughout the year, increasing from 8.99 to 9.86 days per FTE, which is now above our target of 8 days per FTE (+/- 1 day). Although this trend is consistent across the national picture, we are taking proactive action to seek to stop the upward trend.
- 2.2 **Absence related to Stress and Mental Health illness**, has again increased over the last 12 months from 2.72 to 3.45 days per FTE. This continues to be higher than our target of 2.5 days per FTE and as part of the attendance at work action plan, we are improving the support and guidance to our people and leaders as well as undertaking an organisational stress risk assessment.
- 2.3 Our **Thrive Wellbeing Check-in** took place in June 2023, the survey saw an increase in our wellbeing score from 78% to 82% and also identified priority areas, which have been incorporated in to the Thrive at work action plan.
- 2.4 The **Manager's absence dashboards** have been developed and tested over the last 12 months and were launched to Tier3 Managers (Heads of Service) in May 2024. The dashboard, which is part of a suite of Power BI dashboards will provide managers with a variety of data to support the with managing attendance. We are now working on extending the dashboard to our Tier 4A managers.
- 2.5 The '**Approach to...**' documents continue to be developed, with an Approach to Menopause and An approach to Domestic Abuse, being developed in the last year, which are due to be launched in autumn 2024.
- 2.6 The **Occupational Health and Employee Assist Programme** contract has been awarded to Health Partners and Vita Health. Following the award of the contract, we continue to look for ways to maximise the effectiveness of the contract.
- 2.7 To support the ongoing work to stabilise absence rates, the proposal for the 24/25 absence target is to remain at 8 days per FTE (+/- 1 day).
- 2.8 Priorities for 2024/2025 include:
- Continue to progress and review the attendance at work action plan to stabilise absence levels
 - Refresh the Attendance at Work policy to better support long term and short-term absence.
 - Achieve Silver Thrive at Work accreditation.

3.0 Performance Data and Benchmarking

3.1 The following section provides the information contained within the annual review in table format.

3.2 Days per FTE

Sickness absence has increased over the last 12 months and is now above the target of 8 days per FTE (+/- 1 day). This increase is consistent with the public sector average and Shires County Average.

Year Ending	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
Days Lost per Employee FTE	10.08	10.26	9.90	9.87	9.51	10.90	7.45	9.04	8.99	9.86
Public Sector Average	8.7	7.9	8.7	8.5	8.5	8.4	8.0	7.7	8.17	10.6
Shire County Average	9.92	9.78	9.36	9.62	9.48	9.19	7.60	9.62	8.83	9.92

Note the Public sector average has a lag in reporting and is a year in arrears and is usually the CIPD statistic, although for 2022/2023 the CIPD did not report, so the converted ONS % into days was used. The Shire County Average is an average of those counties who have reported their absence for 2023/2024.

3.3 By Service Area

6 out of 13 services are within the target of 8 days (+/- 1 day) per FTE, our priority areas for focus are Social Care and Support, Children and Families, Workforce and Local Services, Enabling and Finance. Many of our services with higher levels of absence are those with community facing services, who are dealing with our most vulnerable residents, and therefore need to ensure that they are fully fit before returning to work. Over the next year we will be working with these services, to see if there are more flexible ways in which individuals can return to work on different duties while they fully recuperate.

	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
WCC (excluding schools)	10.26	9.9	9.87	9.51	10.9	7.45	9.04	8.99	9.86
Communities Directorate	9.28	9.21	9.05	8.44	9.65	5.64	5.9	6.87	7.83
Economy and Place	10.19	11.12	8.31	7.12	7.93	9.27	6.66	8.52	7.44
Environment Planning & Transport					7.02	4.45	8.26	6.4	7.6
Fire & Rescue	8.42	7.91	10.22	10.09	14.34	4.73	4.48	6.61	8.19
Strategic Infrastructure & Climate Change	New Service								9.01
Children & Young People Directorate	13.16	13.12	12.12	12.12	14.11	10.51	11.48	10.64	10.39

Children & Families	12.86	11.45	12.4	11.66	13.12	10.8	10.48	10.92	11.82
Education Services	8.54	9.62	9.09	7.07	7.83	5.18	5.19	5.32	6.63
Resources Directorate	8.87	8.36	7.05	8.25	9.94	6.52	8.94	8.65	9.55
Enabling	9.46	7.77	5.03	8.04	7.98	6.35	9.16	8.14	10.32
Finance	7.35	7.18	8.81	7.3	7.18	5.83	6.74	4.37	10.13
Strategy, Planning & Governance	7.95	5.92	6.77	5.49	6.08	4.03	6.75	5.9	4.97
Workforce & Local Services	New service								11.57
Social Care & Health Directorate	13.16	13.12	12.12	12.12	14.11	10.51	11.48	10.64	13.64
Social Care & Support	16	15.37	13.35	13.38	16.22	11.54	14.57	14.64	14.8
Social Care & Health Commissioning	13	11.24	4.03	7.98	7.98	2.28	4.13	3.03	9.38
Public Health	6.56	7.49	7.95	15.15	6.22	1.9	5.11	6.52	3.48

The restructuring of services has resulted in inconsistencies with the trend information. For Children and Young People and for Social Care and Health the old People Directorate total has been used for past year trend.

3.4 Percentage No Absence

The percentage of our people who have not had an absence in the last twelve months has increased from 41% to 47%, which is pleasing and reinforced that it is the long term and recurring absences that should be our focus.

No Absence	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
WCC	38.70%	40.70%	39.60%	38.10%	39.95%	50.45%	63.30%	43.97%	40.74%	46.96%

3.5 Benchmarking information

Benchmark data on average days absence has been obtained from the Shire Counties network to provide comparative data, however, this is not yet a complete picture. Datasets should be considered as illustrative as the precise method for calculation, together with absence strategies, may differ.

The public service sector average for 2023/2024 was 10.6 days per employee per year, compared to 8.17 days reported in 2022/2023.

Our absence rate continues to be within the mid-range of our benchmarking information.

Local Authority	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Warwickshire	9.9	9.87	9.51	10.90	7.45	8.61	8.99	9.86
LA a	8.4	9.1	9.4	9.80	6.47	9.27	9.01	8.63
LA b				9.00	7.70			

LA c	13.2	11.9	12.4	13.63	12.90	15.43		
LA d				10.18	8.30	7.00		
LA e				11.03	8.23			
LA f	7.8	9.1	8.1	8.59	5.64	8.93	8.62	8.5
LA g	6.9	7.3	7.5	8.02	5.99	7.17	8.18	8.24
LA h				10.08	7.51		9.45	
LA i					5.91	8.47	7.77	7.15
LA j				8.39	6.46	8.25	9.31	12.52
LA k				11.2	10.53	10.38		
LA l				7.42	6.42	9.95	7.9	10.2
LA m	7.5	8.3	6.7	7.42	6.42	8.03		9.09
LA n	12.9	13.6	13	11.91	8.79			11.15
LA o		10.6	10.7	6.65	9.48	12.14	11.9	11
LA p				6.39	4.81			
LA q				6.74	9.48			
LA r				8.1	6.00	7.95	8.09	11
LA s	7.3	7.3	7.3				8.3	
LA t	10.4	11.4	11.3			10	11.39	11.77
LA u	9.1	8.8	9.7					
Mean Average	9.36	9.62	9.48	9.19	7.60	9.62	8.83	9.92
Public Sector	8.7	8.5	8.5	8.4	8.0	7.7	8.17	10.6

3.6 Percentage of time lost due to short-term / long-term sickness

During the last 12 months, we have seen an increase in the long term sickness across all directorates and therefore this is an area of focus.

	WCC		Communities		Children & YP		Resources		Social Care & H	
	Short Term	Long Term	Short Term	Long Term	Short Term	Long Term	Short Term	Long Term	Short Term	Long Term
2015/16	37.3%	62.7%	41.1%	58.9%	33.8%	66.2%	40.0%	60.0%	33.8%	66.2%
2016/17	39.7%	60.3%	38.9%	61.1%	37.3%	62.7%	45.6%	54.4%	37.3%	62.7%
2017/18	36.6%	63.4%	39.8%	60.2%	33.6%	64.4%	44.7%	55.3%	33.6%	64.4%
2018/19	37.4%	62.6%	39.0%	61.0%	32.4%	67.6%	44.2%	55.8%	32.4%	67.6%
2019/20	33.5%	66.5%	33.1%	66.9%	30.2%	69.8%	39.0%	61.0%	30.2%	69.8%
2020/21	28.6%	71.5%	27.0%	73.0%	27.4%	72.6%	31.8%	68.2%	27.4%	72.6%
2021/22	36.4%	63.6%	39.9%	60.1%	33.7%	62.3%	37.3%	62.7%	33.7%	62.3%
2022/23	41.2%	58.8%	45.2%	65.8%	39.7%	60.3%	43.4%	56.6%	39.7%	60.3%
2023/24	32.5%	67.5%	30.7%	69.3%	33.3%	66.7%	34.2%	65.8%	32.2%	67.8%

Short-term absence = below 20 working days. Long term absence four weeks plus

Reason Withheld	3.9%	5.5%	0.9%	5.9%	6.1%	5.9%	4.3%	4.4%	0%
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3.9 Occupational Health Referrals and Reasons

Overall Management referrals have increased in the last 12 months, with the reason for referrals remaining consistent. We continue to work with managers to ensure timely referrals to occupational health for individuals who are suffering with stress and mental health.

As the changes to the directorates took place mid-year, this data is recorded at the old directorate levels, which will be updated for next year's report

Directorate	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
Communities	77	73	99	103	78	111	73	84	47	73
People	256	211	168	181	181	222	210	260	291	311
Resources	127	128	110	97	79	78	94	132	127	136
Total	460	412	377	381	338	411	377	476	465	520

Referral Reasons	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
Mental Health	40%	47%	50%	51%	42%	42%
Musculo-Skeletal	21%	20%	15%	9%	19%	20%
Other Reasons	39%	33%	35%	40%	39%	38%

3.10 Employee Assist Programme

The Employee Assistance Programme provision is available to all WCC colleagues (excluding WFRS who have their own in-house provision) and has continued to be extensively communicated and promoted to colleagues. The amount of referrals has reduced slightly.

We have recently retendered both the Occupational Health and the Employee Assist Programme contract, and are therefore working on how we maximise the opportunities to support our people through both contracts.

Reason for Contact	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
Emotional Support	128	163	196	185
Other	37	29	58	47
Total	165	192	254	232

4.0 Key Areas of Focus and Attendance at Work Action Plan

4.1 The following form part of our wellbeing at work activity for 2024/2025:

- Attendance at work action plan to proactively manage the increasing absence, including:
 - Deep dive into the data to support targeted actions.
 - Discussions with Corporate Board and Directorate Leadership Team and development opportunities to increase leadership capability, at Senior Leadership Forum, Directorate Leadership Teams and targeted management team meetings.
 - Increasing return to work completion in YourHR.
 - Escalation of Long Term sickness cases to senior leaders and ensure an ongoing action plan is being progressed.
 - Refreshed our Mental Health support and dividing into support for individuals and support for leaders, through absence notification, ensuring managers have access to this support in a timely manner.
 - Ongoing discussions with our Occupational Health and Employee Assist programme provider to maximise the support they can provide.
 - Undertake an organisational wider stress risk assessment.
- Refresh the Attendance at Work policy to better support long-term and short-term absence and better enable people to return to work in a flexible way.
- Achieve Silver Thrive at Work accreditation.
- Embedding our Managers' Absence Dashboards.
- Launching and embedding a series of Our Approach documents.
- Continue to monitor our wellbeing offer, through our YourSay Activity and attendance at work metrics.
- Continue to work with colleagues in public health to maximise wellbeing across the wider community.

5.0 Financial Implications

5.1 The estimated opportunity cost of days lost due to sickness absence has increased by £0.7 million, this can be attributed to an increase in sickness absence as well as staffing costs following the pay settlements. Please note that this figure does not include any cover costs where cover arrangements may have been put into place.

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Estimated Cost	£3.1 million	£3.5 million	£2.8 million	£4.2 million	£4.5 million	£5.2 million

6.0 Environmental Implications

6.1 None for this report.

7.0 Conclusions

- 7.1 Through 2023/2024, whilst we have continued to demonstrate our commitment to wellbeing and keeping our people well and in work, we have found that our absence rates have started to increase and are now above target.
- 7.2 Whilst the increase in absence is a national trend, we have put an attendance at work action plan in place to try and reduce our absence rates, our focus for the next year will be in stabilising our absence levels.
- 7.3 We continued to collect evidence to apply for Silver Thrive at Work, which we are hoping to achieve in Autumn 2024.
- 7.4 Our wellbeing Your Say engagement score increased to 81% agreement.
- 7.5 We have repocured our Occupational Health and Employee Assist Programme contract, and look forward to working with the providers to support our people to be well and in work.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Annual Review focus in Leading Organisational Wellbeing 2023/2024

Background Papers

None

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