

Executive Member Response To Sickness Management Scrutiny Review

Date Recommendations agreed by Overview & Scrutiny Committee:

Overview & Scrutiny Committee, 18 /03/ 2019
(circulated 28/03/2019)

Date responses should be made by:

Executive response on behalf of the Executive Portfolio Holder for Resources, Cllr Joan Lloyd; should be received by 10/05/2019

Recommendations:

1. That a comprehensive staff communication plan be developed and implemented prior to the introduction of First Care which, amongst other points, will highlight that this process has been introduced to improve employee wellbeing which in turn should reduce sickness levels.

Executive Response:

Recommendation agreed - a comprehensive communications plan is currently in development and there will be a least a 2 months of communications and engagement activity ahead of the service being launched. The communications plan will focus on the benefits the service provides in terms of supporting employee health and wellbeing

Action: Interim CE, Matt Partridge, Senior HR Manager, Clare Davies, Corporate Communications Manager, Sandy Eaton	
<p>2. That officers seek to measure the return on investment post implementation of First Care. If possible the First Care contribution to the Council meeting its sickness target should be quantified and measured noting also that the First Care service contract also included a target for demonstrating an improvement in staff wellbeing and that the performance of the First Care Contract be revisited in a year to evaluate its success.</p> <p>Action: Interim CE, Matt Partridge, Senior HR Manager, Clare Davies</p>	<p>Recommendation agreed – there will be quarterly contract review meetings with the account manager at First Care and at this meeting performance will be reviewed against the agreed KPI's to measure the improvement.</p>
<p>3. That officers work with the Portfolio Holder to seek to reduce sickness absence which has been specifically associated with the undertaking of the Business Unit Reviews.</p> <p>Action: Interim CE, Matt Partridge, Senior HR Manager, Clare Davies</p>	<p>There are a range of support packages in place to support our staff as they go through change, with the aim of trying to keep them engaged and reduce stress and anxiety (and any potential absence) wherever possible. However, we recognise that change impacts individuals differently. Absence will continue to be monitored and once change programmes are complete within Business Units, it will then be possible to measure sickness related to the reviews.</p>
<p>4. That the seasonal variations and peaks and troughs in certain Business Units sickness levels be recorded by officers and be provided to Members through the quarterly performance report.</p> <p>Action: Interim CE, Matt Partridge, Senior HR Manager, Clare Davies</p>	<p>Recommendation agreed - This can be included in the quarterly performance information.</p>

<p>5. That the Portfolio Holder and officers continue to seek to identify specific interventions which might help reduce sickness absence associated with stress, anxiety and depression (Please see Appendix E – Time to Change Action Plan and Section 4 of the Report dated 14 November 2018).</p> <p>Action: Interim CE, Matt Partridge, Senior HR Manager, Clare Davies</p>	<p>Recommendation agreed – Annually we renew our commitment to the Time to Change Pledge and develop a new action plan to try and reduce stress, anxiety and depression.</p>
<p>6. Approximately half of all staff has little or no sickness leave each year, the other half account for the remainder of the sickness figures (16-18 days a year). As such, Scrutiny Members support the Senior Leadership Team's efforts and measures they have introduced to address this issue and request that an update report be provided in approximately one year to further consider performance in this regard.</p> <p>Action: Interim CE, Matt Partridge, Senior HR Manager, Clare Davies</p>	<p>Recommendation agreed – information will be provided at the appropriate time.</p>
<p>7. That the impact of ill health and pressures on staff who act as carers be acknowledged by the employer side as a genuine pressure and that the Council's sickness policy and other Council policies addresses this issue and provides sufficient support for carers.</p> <p>Action: Interim CE, Matt Partridge, Senior HR Manager, Clare Davies</p>	<p>Recommendation agreed – The Council currently operates flexible working arrangements both through the flexi-time scheme and we also offer staff the opportunity to apply for flexible working arrangements (such as part time, compressed hours, annualised hours) and this is with the aim of supporting staff. Consideration will also be given to exploring emergency care leave for situations when usual care arrangements breakdown.</p>
<p>8. That the HR Team be invited to consider the suitability of a monthly wellbeing staff survey template to provide an example of the monthly staff survey undertaken in his workplace as part</p>	<p>Recommendation agreed – soft market testing is already underway to explore the applications available on the market that could deliver this.</p>

<p>of the wellbeing policy with a view to potentially using a similar anonymous staff survey to gauge the wellbeing of SBC staff.</p> <p>Action: Interim CE, Matt Partridge, Senior HR Manager, Clare Davies</p>	
<p>9. That the Volunteer Policy be publicised and promoted amongst staff and that an evaluation of its success be brought back to Members.</p> <p>Action: Interim CE, Matt Partridge, Senior HR Manager, Clare Davies</p>	<p>Recommendation agreed – time off for volunteering is recorded on the HR System and we will promote and celebrate the success of the new policy during national volunteer week (1-7 June 2019)</p>
<p>10. That the Council seeks to identify the causes of sickness covering underlying “big picture” issues such as pay restraint and austerity, office ergonomics, problems with ICT etc.</p> <p>Action: Interim CE, Matt Partridge, Senior HR Manager, Clare Davies</p>	<p>It is recognised that this may be challenging to report upon, as the reasons given for absence are usually medical. However, wherever we have this information we will look to bring this to the attention of SLT and Members, whilst ensuring we do not identify individual employees.</p>
<p>11. That from the information obtained from the two officers interviewed on the recommendation of HR (Supported Housing & Customer Service Centre), the following additional recommendation be considered: That a questionnaire/survey is undertaken with officers (in at least the two areas identified above, but this could be broadened to include other areas) to establish staff’s views of the current sickness management processes.</p>	<p>We welcome views from staff across the Council, however, we should also be mindful of the resources required to complete such surveys and survey fatigue by respondents. There will be the staff survey temperature check during 2019 and we will look to incorporate some questions on sickness absence in this.</p>

Action: Interim CE, Matt Partridge, Senior HR Manager, Clare Davies	
<p>12. That officers consider amending the existing policy to address the issues raised by officers from Customer Service Centre and Housing Investment detailed at 4.1.14 to 4.1.26 in the report.</p> <p>Action: Interim CE, Matt Partridge, Senior HR Manager, Clare Davies</p>	<p>Recommendation agreed – the Sickness Absence Policy is currently being reviewed in preparation for the introduction of First Care, so the issues identified will also be fed into this review.</p>
<p>13. That (i) Managers be provided with flexibility to use discretion when managing sickness and inconsistencies across the organisation; and (ii) That planned medical operations/procedures and accidents be treated differently from other sickness reporting.</p> <p>Action: Interim CE, Matt Partridge, Senior HR Manager, Clare Davies</p>	<p>Recommendation agreed – Manager discretion already exists within the current policy, so this may be a training need to remind managers that they can use their judgement.</p>
<p>14. That the offer from CSC and Housing Investment be tied in with the option of a wider staff questionnaire/survey at Recommendation 8.</p> <p>Action: Interim CE, Matt Partridge, Senior HR Manager, Clare Davies</p>	<p>Recommendation noted and agreed</p>
<p>15. That managers have access to past Return to Work Interviews, sickness data and reasons for informal/formal meetings all in one place.</p>	<p>Recommendation agreed and this will be introduced as part of the First Care launch, where managers will be provided with access to a secure portal with access to sickness absence information for their team members.</p>

Action: Interim CE, Matt Partridge, Senior HR Manager, Clare Davies	
<p>16. That officers consider clarifying the trigger points between formal and informal interviews.</p> <p>Action: Interim CE, Matt Partridge, Senior HR Manager, Clare Davies</p>	<p>This recommendation links with recommendation 14 (above). There is not set trigger between informal and formal, and this is to allow managers discretion to consider the individual circumstances on a case by case basis.</p>