

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**Report by Strategic Lead – People and Technology****Housing and Communities: 6 November 2019**

**Subject: Employee Wellbeing:
Bi-Annual Results Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 (April – September 2019)****1. Purpose**

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to provide Committee with detailed analysis on the attendance performance for quarters 1 and 2 (April 2019 –September 2019).

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** It is recommended that Committee notes the below findings for reported absence in quarters 1 and 2 2019 (April – September 2019):
- The increase in Council wide sickness absence of 3471.84 FTE days lost (approx. 13.6%) compared to the same period last year as outlined in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2; and
 - The increase in sickness absence of 116.67 FTE days lost (approx. 10.2%) compared to the same period last year for Housing and Employability as outlined in Appendix 3 and Appendix 4.
 - It should be noted that a number of services were restructured in quarter 1 2019 and so any historical comparisons in relation to services impacted by the change should be considered only as an indication and not as an absolute figure. Further information regarding the services impacted is available in section 4.4.3 of this report.

3. Background

- 3.1** The Council is committed to supporting the health and wellbeing of all employees. This is driven by our Employee Wellbeing Strategy and supported by initiatives and projects delivered through the Employee Wellbeing Group. The aim of this work is to improve employee morale and engagement, promote a healthier and more inclusive culture and lower sickness absence rates.

4. Main Issues**April 2019 – September 2019 Performance**

- 4.1** In quarter 1 and quarter 2, 1144.5 days were lost due to sickness absence across Housing and Employability. This represents an increase of 116.67 FTE days lost compared to the same period last year.
- 4.1.2** Table 1 details benchmarking information to enable comparison to the previous year, the service's best performance in the last 3 years is stated as is the CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development) benchmark for the public sector. The FTE figure is shown to provide context to the scale of the service in terms of employees.
- 4.1.3** Housing & Employability has reported a lower level of sickness absence than the Council wide average however it has significantly increased compared to the same period last year. A contributing factor to this may be the increased levels of full time equivalent employees.
- 4.1.4** It is positive to note that if the level of sickness absence were to remain static in quarters 3 and 4, the service would be performing in line with the CIPD benchmark figure for the public sector. However, given that there is an established pattern of sickness absence increasing in the winter months, the service may find it difficult to achieve this benchmark at the end of 2019/20.

Table 1 – Benchmarking Information including average FTE days lost per FTE employee

Strategic Lead Area	FTE as at 30 Sept 2018	April - September 2018/19	FTE as at 30 Sept 2019	April - September 2019/20	H&E Best Annual Performance	Public Sector Benchmark 2018/19*
Council Wide	4643.15	4.78	4784.47	5.37	8.86 (2016/17)	8.4
Housing & Employability	260.09	3.98	271.76	4.24		

- 4.1.5** Table 2 details the variance in reported sickness absence levels between 2018/19 and 2019/20. Whilst the total number of FTE days lost in Housing and Employability hasn't increased as much as the Council wide figure in percentage terms, a significant increase has still been reported. This can be attributed to a high level of sickness absences caused by minor illness and an increase in long term absence cases.

Table 2 – Variance in days lost due to sickness absence

Strategic Lead Area	Total FTE days April - Sept 18/19	Total FTE days lost April - Sept 19/20	Variance in April - Sept 18/19 vs April - Sept 19/20 (%)*	Variance April - Sept 18/19 vs April - Sept 19/20 (total FTE days lost)
Council Wide	22127.23	25599.07	13.56%	3471.84
Housing & Employability	1027.82	1144.49	10.19%	116.67

4.2 Absence Reasons – Service Performance

4.2.1 Appendix 1 and 2 provide a detailed breakdown of the reasons for absence Council Wide.

4.2.2 Table 3 below shows the top 3 reasons for absence in quarters 1 and 2 for the area covered by this report and compares these to the Council Wide results for the same period.

4.2.3 The top 3 reasons for absence in Housing and Employability are minor illness, personal stress and acute medical conditions. Whilst these reasons are also in the Council wide top reasons for absence, the Council wide picture presents them in a different order with acute medical reasons being the 2nd highest reason for sickness absence followed by personal stress.

4.2.4 Personal stress has replaced musculo-skeletal injuries in the top 3 reasons for absences Council wide and in Housing & Employability. In order to support employees who experience personal stress, the Employee Wellbeing Group continues to have a particular focus on mental health and wellbeing. Further information on the key activities being undertaken can be found in section 4.7 of this report.

Table 3 – Reasons analysis – Service performances

	Reason	%	Reason	%	Reason	%
Council Wide	Minor Illness	21.40%	Acute Medical Conditions	21.10%	Personal Stress	15.50%
Housing & Employability	Minor Illness	24%	Personal Stress	17%	Acute Medical Conditions	14%

4.3 Absence Duration – Service Performance

4.3 Table 4 shows the duration profile for Housing and Employability and compares to the overall Council-wide duration profile. Long term absence accounts for approximately 78% of Council-wide absence for quarters 1 and 2, which is a significant increase compared to the same period in the previous year. Housing and Employability also reports 78% of absences being long term which is also an increase compared to the same period last year. This is also illustrated in Appendix 3 and 4 and illustrates that the absences can be attributed to a number of long term cases linked to personal stress and acute medical conditions.

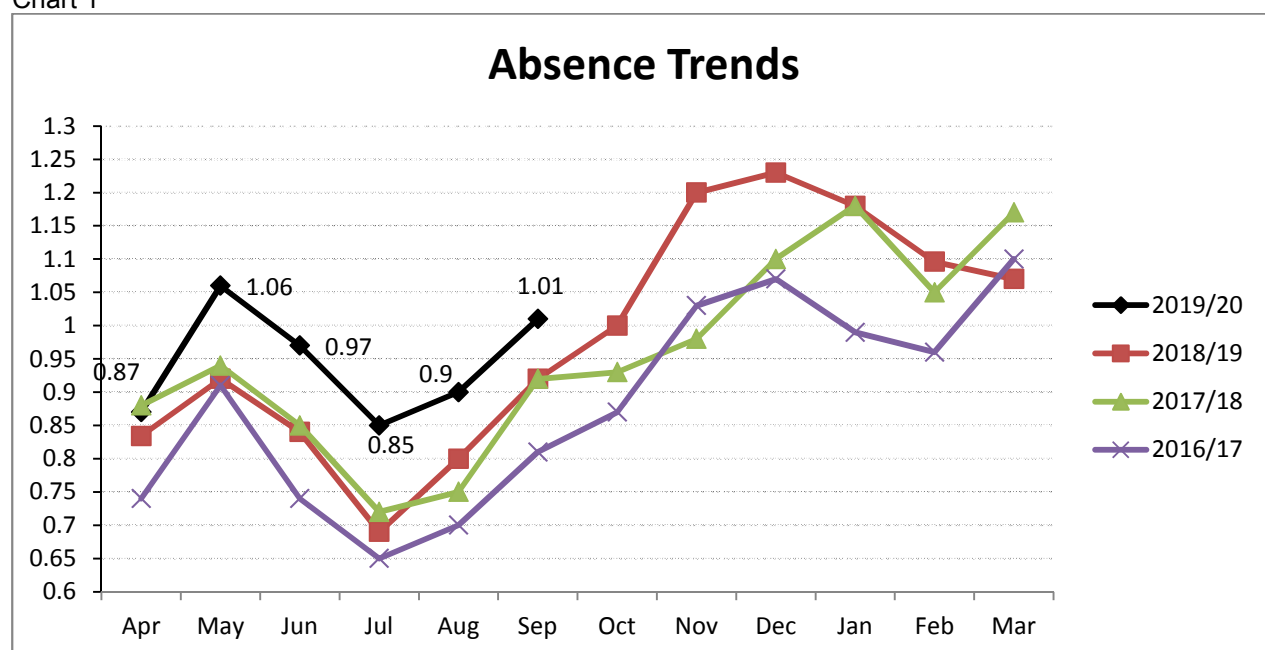
Table 4 – Duration analysis – Service performances

	April - Sept 18/19		April - Sept 19/20	
	Short Term (% of total absence)	Long Term (% of total absence)	Short Term (% of total absence)	Long Term (% of total absence)
Council Wide	30%	70%	22%	78%
Housing & Employability	24%	76%	22%	78%

April – September 2019 Council-wide Performance

4.4.1 Chart 1 below shows that, in quarters 1 and 2, the Council's absence performance deteriorated by approx. 11% compared to the same period in the previous year. Based on historic performance it is likely that absence levels will continue to increase during quarter 3 and potentially decrease again in quarter 4. However, given the higher levels of absence in the first half of 2019/20, it is likely that the total absence levels for 2019/20 will be higher than in previous years.

Chart 1



4.4.2 Table 5 (below) shows absence levels for quarters 1 and 2 (2019/20), by Strategic Lead Area, and associated bi-annual figures for 2019/20 to allow comparison. Please note that the FTE days lost per FTE employee which is reported for each Strategic Lead Area is based on where employees were located as at 30 September 2019.

4.4.3 It should be noted that a restructure took place in quarter 1 2019 and as such a number of services either moved to another Strategic Lead area or are now reported as a stand alone service. As such any historical comparisons in relation to these services should only be considered as an indication.

Table 5 – Total FTE days lost April – Sept 2019 and levels of Variance

Strategic Lead Area	Total FTE days April - Sept 18/19	Total FTE days lost April - Sept 19/20	Variance in April - Sept 18/19 vs April - Sept 19/20 (%)*	Variance April - Sept 18/19 vs April - Sept 19/20 (total FTE days lost)
Council Wide	22127.23	25599.07	13.56%	3471.84
People & Technology	141.35	99.87	-41.53%	-41.48
Regulatory	180.38	95.41	-89.06%	-84.97
Resources	1004.35	1334.23	24.72%	329.88
Chief Exec Office Total	NA	785.91*	NA	NA
Child Healthcare & Criminal Justice	1797.83	1789.36	-0.47%	-8.47
Community Health & Care	6824.65	8831.06	22.72%	2006.41
Finance & Resources	0	0	0.00%	0
Mental Health, Addiction & Learning Disabilities	928.03	895.86	-3.59%	-32.17
Strategy, Planning & Health Improvement	28.23	184.11	84.67%	155.88
HSCP Total	9599.29	11700.39	17.96%	2101.1
Environment & Neighbourhood	3202.58	2873.04	-11.47%	-329.5441216
Housing & Employability	1027.82	1144.49	10.19%	116.6715385
Regeneration	2204.91	2782.07	20.75%	577.16
Roads & Transportation	NA	221.87**	NA	NA
Regeneration, Environment & Growth Total	6435.31	7021.47	8.35%	586.16
Strategic Management	0	6.94	100.00%	6.937857143
Strategic Management Total	0	6.94	100.00%	6.937857143
CCCF	586.37	876.56	33.11%	290.185
Education Learning & Attainment (Support Staff)	2311.11	2658.85	13.08%	347.737168
Resources (Pro)	NA	8.73***	NA	NA
Transformation & Public Service Reform (Excl. Teachers)	4223.56	4287.73	1.50%	64.17
Local Government Employees Total	20258.16	23892.2	15.21%	3634.04
Transformation & Public Service Reform (Teachers)	1869.08	1706.81	-9.51%	-162.27

*Please note that in quarter 1 these services reported as part Transformation & Public Service Reform and so the data provided for the Chief Exec Office total is in relation to quarter 2 2019 only.

**Please note that in quarter 1 Roads and Transportation reported as part of Environment & Neighbourhood and so the data provided for this service is in relation to quarter 2 2019 only.

***Please note that in quarter 1 Procurement reported as part of Resources and so the data provided is in relation to quarter 2 only.

Employee Wellbeing Group

4.5 The Employee Wellbeing Group continues to make progress through wellbeing initiatives, employee support mechanisms and working with trade unions and local partners to identify and address areas for improvement. Updates on progress are reported to Performance and Monitoring Group on a monthly basis. Actions which have been completed since the last report to this Committee in May 2019, or which are currently being progressed, include the following:

- Regular meetings for both the Manager's group for Employee Wellbeing and the Wellbeing Advocates group have been established and are taking place on a quarterly basis. These groups look ahead to the Employee Wellbeing theme for the next quarter and work together to identify appropriate actions in support of the theme.
- Throughout quarter 1 and 2 a number of activities took place including an Employee Wellbeing Information Event during which support providers displayed stalls, employees had an opportunity to participate in health checks and learn more about the Employee Supports available. This was well attended and a follow up event is currently being planned for Senior Management.
- A range of communications were shared with employees highlighting the learning and development opportunities available including a range of opportunities linked to the digital transformation agenda such as Outlook and Excel training.
- A new Menopause guidance document was launched to support employees and managers which was followed up with training intended to raise awareness about the impact of the menopause, this was delivered in conjunction with the Trade Union Learning Fund.
- The Disability Passport Guidance was launched; this replaces the Tailored Adjustment guidance and provides employees and managers with guidance regarding how to support employees who have a disability.
- A range of promotional communications were shared to highlight the importance of physical activity including walks in Levenshulme Park, the Cycle to Work scheme and a summer walking challenge.
- West Dunbartonshire Leisure Trust continued their regular visits to Council premises to promote their discounted membership deals for Council employees and carry out health checks.
- The pilot project with Headtorch has continued with selected groups of employees and managers receiving training on mental health awareness.

- The Council's submission for Healthy Working Lives Award was successful and the Gold standard award has been maintained.
- A number of communications were shared during Suicide Prevention week to highlight the support available to employees in relation to mental health. This included additional resources that have been added to the Employee Wellbeing Intranet pages for advice on mental health and financial wellbeing.
- Training sessions designed to raise awareness of mental health were delivered in conjunction with the Trade Union Learning Fund
- Further developments have taken place to enhance the functionality of HR21; this marked the start of a programme of work to automate the administration of sickness absence reporting for managers where possible. This work will continue into quarter 3 and 4.
- A review of the current Attendance Management policy is underway in conjunction with Trade Union colleagues; the aim of the review is to ensure that the policy is as supportive as possible and a communication plan to support the roll out is currently being developed.
- Following a review, HR data used to inform workforce planning and supporting managers with attendance management is now being used to better effect.
- The Council was awarded the Gold Award for the support provided to Reservists and their family
- Following a tendering exercise, a new provider was secured for the provision of the Employee Counselling Service. The change in provider took effect in September and a range of communications were shared with employees and management to inform them of the change.

5. People Implications

- 5.1** Effective and robust management of absence can have a positive impact upon employees, promoting early return to good health and work. The results for April – September 2019 indicate a deterioration for the area covered by this Committee. However, levels remain below the Council average. The service is engaged with the Employee Wellbeing Group and is committed to supporting employee wellbeing through the implementation of actions developed through the group.

6. Financial and Procurement Implications

- 6.1** Based on the estimated cost of a day's absence of £138, table 8 provides the estimated cost of absence across the Council and the Strategic Lead area. This does not include any associated costs such as cover or overtime.

Table 8 – Cost of absence

Strategic Lead Area	April - September 19/20 Cost (approx.)
Council Wide	£3,053,558
Housing & Employability	£141,839

6.3 There are no procurement implications.

7. Risk Analysis

7.1 There is a risk that managers do not fulfil their role and comply with the policy and in turn Council-wide absence continues to increase.

7.2 While it is evident in many instances that the necessary and proactive steps are being undertaken, such as early referral to occupational health, there is still a significant amount of work to do to continue to reduce absence.

7.3 Without maintaining and continuing to improve attendance there continues to be a risk of detrimental impact on service delivery, loss of productivity and reduced team performance.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

8.1 This report is for noting only, therefore no EIA is required. Any associated policies are subject to Equalities Impact Screening and Assessment if required.

9. Consultation

9.1 Consultation is on-going with trades unions in the main through the Wellbeing Group, the local Joint Consultative Committees, Convenor meetings and, for more strategic matters, through Joint Consultative Forum.

10. Strategic Assessment

10.1 Effective attendance management will support the Council's aim to make best use of both financial and human resources resulting in a positive impact upon service provision.

Victoria Rogers
Strategic Lead People and Technology
Date: 9 October 2019

Person to Contact: Louise Hastings, HR Business Partner
People & Technology

16 Church St, Dumbarton
Tel: 01389 737687
Email: louise.hastings@west-dunbarton.gov.uk.

Appendices: Appendix 1 Council Wide Quarter 1 2019/2020 Absence Summary
Appendix 2 Council Wide Quarter 2 2019/2020 Absence

	Summary
Appendix 3	Housing and Employability Quarter 1 2019/2020 Absence Summary
Appendix 4	Housing and Employability Quarter 2 2019/2020 Absence Summary

Background Papers: None

Wards Affected: None

