

## WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

## Report by Strategic Lead – People and Technology

Education Committee: 5 June 2019

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**Subject: Employee Wellbeing: Attendance Management  
Education Annual Update 2018-2019**

**1. Purpose**

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to provide Committee with detailed analysis on employee wellbeing and annual attendance performance for 2018/19 for Education.

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1** It is recommended that Committee notes the below annual findings for reported absence in 2018/19:
- The increase in annual sickness absence of 1,013.86 FTE days lost compared to the previous year for the Education Learning and Attainment, (Appendix 1)
  - The increase in Council wide annual sickness absence of 2932.45 FTE days lost compared to the previous year. (Appendix 2)

**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****4.1 Annual (2018/2019) Service Performance**

- 4.1.2** In 2018/19, a total of 12,226.08 FTE days were lost due to sickness absence across Education, Learning and Attainment. This represents an increase of 1,013.86 FTE days lost compared to 2017/18.
- 4.1.3** Table 2 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.

- 4.1.4** The table shows that both teachers and support staff have lower levels of absence than the Council average and Teachers consistently reporting significantly below the public sector benchmark. As with the wider council 2016/17 has been the services best results on record for Support staff and for Teachers the best annual performance was 2013/14.

Table 2 – Benchmarking Information

Strategic Lead Area	FTE as at 31st March 2019	Annual 2017/18	Annual 2018/19	Service- Best Annual Performance	Public Sector Benchmark 2018/19*
Council Wide	4525.34	10.67	11.52	10.47 (2016/17)	8.4
Teachers	869.12	5.7	6.24	5.28 (2013/2014)	
Support Employees	685.91	9.65	9.97	9.36 (2016/17)	

\*Source 2019 CIPD Health and Wellbeing at Work report

- 4.1.5** Table 3 details the variance in reported sickness absence levels between 2017/18 and 2018/19. Teachers absence has increased by 442.64 FTE days lost and support staff have increased by 611.22 FTE days lost.
- 4.1.6** Support staff had improved results from March to October compared to 2017/18 but in November – January reported significantly higher absence which accounted for the overall annual increase.
- 4.1.7** Teachers had less variance than support staff at the start of the year when compared to the figures reported 2017/18 and also reported the same significant increase in winter sickness from November – January. This pattern of increased winter sickness absence was evident across the council.

Table 3 – Variance in days lost due to sickness absence

Strategic Lead Area	Total FTE days lost 17/18	Total FTE days lost 18/19	Variance in 17/18 vs 18/19 (%)	Variance 17/18 vs 18/19 (total FTE days lost)
Council Wide	49199.61	52132.06	5.63%	2932.45
Teachers	4984.24	5426.88	8.16%	442.64
Support Employees	6227.98	6839.20	8.94%	611.22

\*This is calculated based on the variance of actual FTE days lost and not the variance in average FTE days lost per FTE employee as shown in the Headline figure in Appendix 1.

## **4.2** Absence Reasons – Service Performance

4.2.1 Appendix 1 provides a detailed breakdown of the reasons for absence Council Wide.

4.2.2 Table 4 below shows the top 3 reasons for absence in 2018/19 for Teachers and Support staff and compares these to the Council Wide results for the same period. As expected minor illness features in the top 3 reasons for absence for both staff groups, however for support staff this is not the top reason for absence, acute medical conditions is the highest at 23.93%

4.2.3 Personal stress features as the 3<sup>rd</sup> top reason for absence for Support staff and Teachers and is an area of focus for the service ensuring all appropriate supports are in place for employees experiencing difficulties in their personal lives .

4.2.4 To support employees experiencing stress or mental health challenges, the Employee Wellbeing Group has had a particular focus on mental health and promoting the services that are available. Further details of this are provided in section 4.4 of this report. Work will continue in this area to establish what additional supports may be beneficial to staff and assist them in maintaining their health and wellbeing.

Table 4 – Reasons analysis – Service performances

	1		2		3	
	Reason	%	Reason	%	Reason	%
<b>Council Wide</b>	<b>Minor Illness</b>	<b>21.89</b>	<b>Acute Medical Conditions</b>	<b>17.79</b>	<b>Musculo Skeletal Injuries</b>	<b>15.51</b>
<b>Teachers</b>	Minor Illness	29.68	Acute Medical Conditions	17.08	Stress - Personal	15.41
<b>Support Employees</b>	Acute Medical Conditions	23.93	Minor Illness	23.11	Stress - Personal	17.71

#### Absence Duration – Service Performance

4.3 Table 5 shows the duration profile for Teachers and Support staff and compares this to the overall Council-wide duration profile. Long term absence accounts for approximately 73.21% of Council-wide absence for 2018/19, which is a small increase compared to the same period in the previous year.

Both staff groups in Education have mirrored this shift towards more prominence of long term absence.

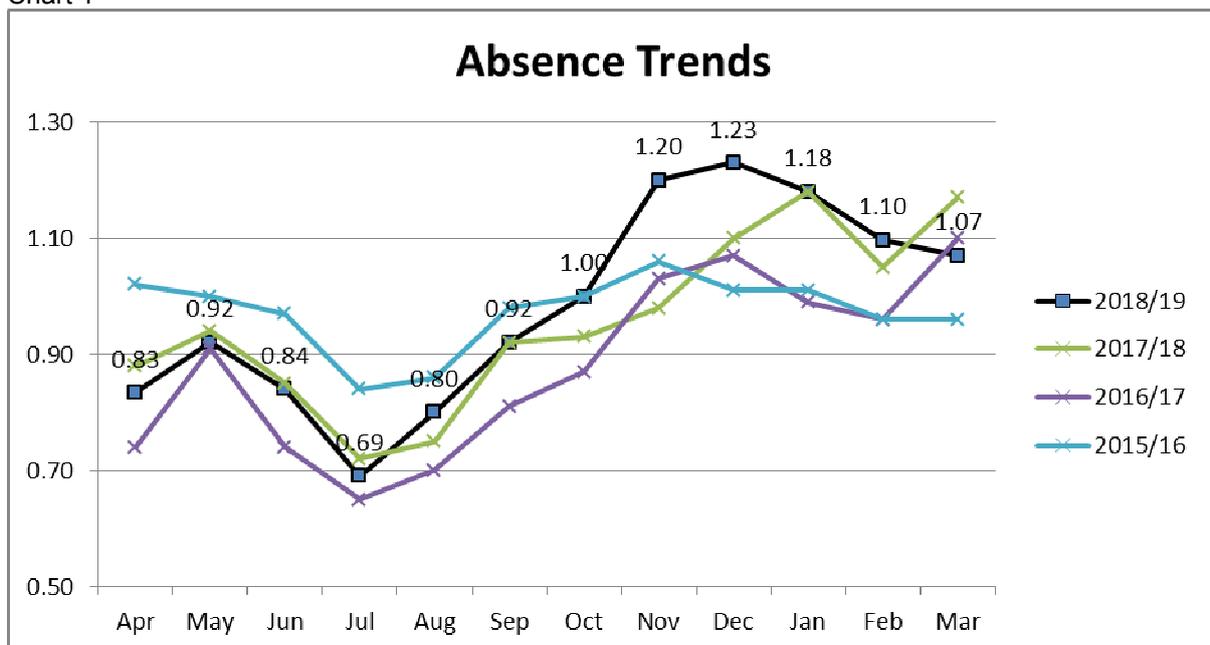
Table 5 – Duration analysis – Service performances

	Annual 2017/18		Annual 2018/19	
	Short Term	Long Term	Short Term	Long Term
<b>Council Wide</b>	<b>28.74%</b>	<b>71.26%</b>	<b>26.79%</b>	<b>73.21%</b>
Teachers	41.58%	58.42%	38.22%	61.78%
Support Employees	35.58%	64.42%	31.81%	68.19%

#### 4.4 Annual 2018/19 Council-wide Performance

4.4.1 Chart 1 below shows the Council’s absence trend for the year compared with the previous 3 years. In 2018/19 absence levels increased by approx. 8% compared to 2017/18. This can be attributed to the significantly higher levels of absence due to minor illness reported during November/December 2018. With the exception of November and December 2018, the absence trend in 2018/19 has largely followed the same pattern as in previous years with peaks in May followed by a reduction in absence levels in June and July and a gradual increase through the autumn and winter months. To date 2016/17 reported the lowest levels of absence Council wide.

Chart 1



**4.4.2** Table 6 (below) shows year end absence levels, by Strategic Lead Area, 2018/19, and associated year-end figures for 2017/2018 to allow comparison. Please note that the year-end Annual FTE days lost per FTE employee which is reported for each Strategic Lead Area is based on where employees were located as at 31 March 2019.

**Table 6**

**2018/19 – Actual FTE days lost per FTE employee**

<b>Service</b>	<b>2018/19 Total</b>	<b>2017/18 Total</b>
Child Healthcare & Criminal Justice	15.55	15.22
Community Health & Care	21.24	18.68
Finance and Resources	0.00	0.00
Mental Health, Addiction & Learning Disabilities	14.71	16.14
Strategy, Planning & Health Improvement	6.48	2.54
<b>Health &amp; Social Care Partnership</b>	<b>18.88</b>	<b>17.26</b>
Environment & Neighbourhood	10.38	11.76
Housing & Employability	10.31	10.04
Regeneration	13.72	10.23
<b>Regeneration, Environment &amp; Growth</b>	<b>11.43</b>	<b>10.94</b>
Communications, Culture & Communities	9.56	5.29
Education Learning & Attainment (Support Staff)	9.97	9.65
People & Technology	3.38	5.16
Regulatory	3.02	3.75
Resources	9.51	7.66
<b>Transformation &amp; Public Service Reform (excl. Teachers) TOTAL</b>	<b>8.86</b>	<b>7.90</b>
Local Government Employee Total	12.77	11.83
<b>Transformation &amp; Public Service Reform (Teachers)</b>	<b>6.24</b>	<b>5.70</b>
<b>COUNCIL-WIDE TOTAL</b>	<b>11.52</b>	<b>10.67</b>

## Employee Wellbeing Group

**4.5** The Employee Wellbeing Group continues to make progress through wellbeing initiatives, employee support mechanisms and joint working with trade unions and local partners to identify and address areas for improvement. Updates on progress are reported to Change Board on a monthly basis. A summary of some of the actions which have been completed since the last report to this Committee in November 2018, or which are currently being progressed, include the following:

- Various promotions including alcohol awareness, mental health, national no smoking day and discounted leisure membership.
- The new Disability Passport guidance was launched and is now available on the intranet. This guidance complements the existing policies and supports that are already in place and it is intended to help managers feel more confident in supporting employees with disabilities throughout the employment cycle.
- A review of the attendance management policy has been undertaken; focus groups have been held with management and Trade Union representatives and the updated policy is now being finalised.
- The 12 month pilot Headtorch Programme continues; senior leadership and HR & OD have completed the training with being rolled out to 2 further areas in the summer period, additionally a session will also be delivered to Trade Union colleagues in April. A full evaluation of the programme will be completed.
- A joint communication was developed with the Trade Unions which promotes the wide range of supports that are currently available; this was shared with Trade Union colleagues and managers. Trade Union colleagues have also been asked to share this with their members.
- An event was held in Church St to promote Time to Talk day, the Chaplaincy attended and were on hand to speak to any employees who wished to access the service. The event encouraged people to take a break and talk about their mental health with colleagues and friends to help break the stigma. A presentation was also ran on the Atrium screen in Church St promoting the support services and employee benefits available to all staff throughout the day.
- As part of the above event, the Council's partnership with Access to Work's Mental Health service was also launched. This service is designed to complement existing support services and enables employees and their family members to access support for up to 9 months via a dedicated worker to will support them to develop a care plan and provided dedicated mental health support. Further information is available on the Employee Wellbeing Intranet pages which have been updated to reflect the new service.
- An exercise to review the platform used to host the Employee Wellbeing Intranet pages has also started and as part of this an alternative platform for the pages is being considered. Moodle, which is the new platform for I-Learn, is being considered as this would allow for online resources to be more accessible to those who have a mobile devise either as part of their

role or at home. As such the details of all supports available to staff would be opened up to a wider audience.

- A review of the Carers' group is also being undertaken as part of the EWG remit and based on feedback from those who attend and the Carers' Network, this support service will become a signposting service to enable employees to access more specialist support as required. The EWG intranet pages are currently being updated to reflect this and the Carer's Network will continue to work in partnership with the group to support employees.
- A number of employees have been trained to be Mental Health First Aiders through training provided by our Trade Union colleagues, a promotion of who these people are is now being planned to ensure that employees are aware of who they can approach for assistance in their service.

## 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 2018/2019 indicate that the sickness absence for both staff groups has increased this year. Teachers continue to outperform the council overall, however the increase of personal stress absence is evident in both staff groups and suggests that there may be further supports required for employees experiencing personal difficulties and also to assist them to maintain their mental health and wellbeing

## 6. Financial and Procurement Implications

- 6.1 Based on the estimated cost of a day's absence of £124, table 6 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 6 – Cost of absence

Strategic Lead Area	2018/19 Cost (approx.)
<b>Council</b>	<b>£6,464,375</b>
Teachers	£672,933
Support Employees	£848,061

- 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, mainly through the Wellbeing Group, the local Joint Consultative Committees, Employee Liaison Group 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.

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**Date: 3 May 2019**

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**Appendices:** Appendix 1 ELA – annual 2018-19  
Appendix 2 Council Wide Annual 2018/19 Absence  
Summary

**Background Papers:** None

**Wards Affected:** None