

**WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**

**Report by Strategic Lead – People and Technology**

**Infrastructure, Regeneration and Economic Development Committee  
15<sup>th</sup> May 2019**

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**Subject: Employee Wellbeing: Attendance Management  
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.

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1** It is recommended that Committee notes the below annual findings for reported absence in 2018/19:
- The increase in Council wide sickness absence of 2932.45 FTE days lost compared to the same period last year as outlined in Appendix 1
  - The increase in sickness absence of 458.24 FTE days lost compared to the same period last year for Infrastructure, Regeneration and Economic Development as outlined in Appendix 2
  - It is also important for the Committee to note that, for the purpose of annual absence reporting, 'FTE employees' is calculated at a point in time (31 March 2019) as opposed to being an average FTE over the 12 month period (2018/19).

**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.

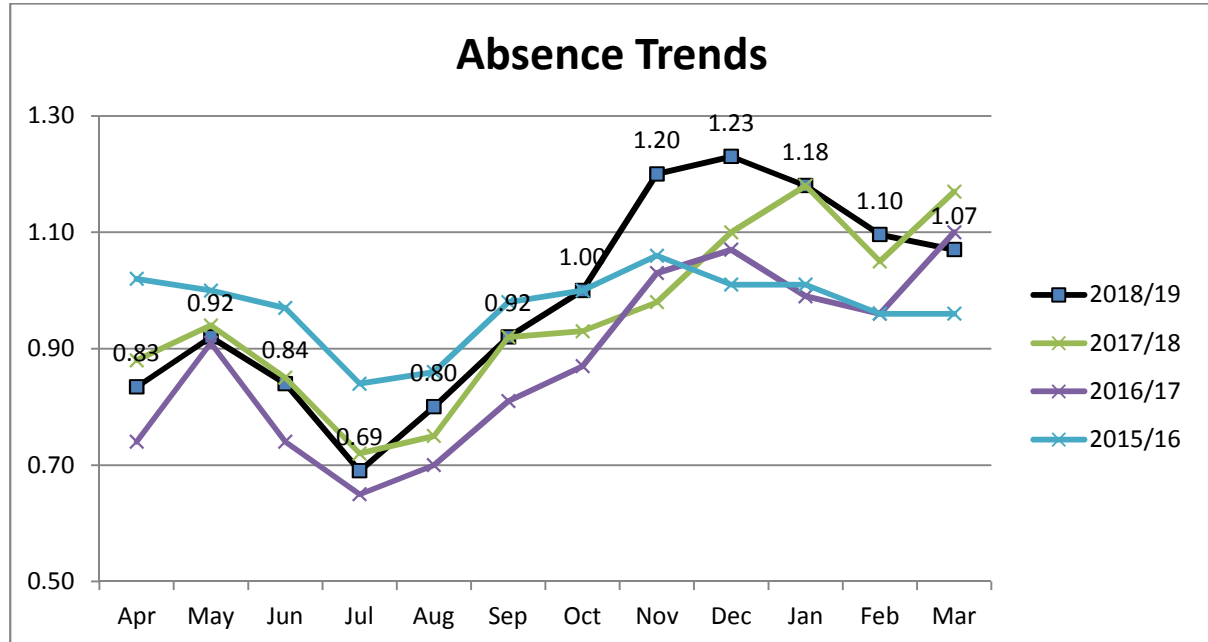
**4. Main Issues**

**Annual 2018/19 Council-wide Performance**

- 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 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.

Chart 1



**4.1.2** Table 1 (below) shows absence levels, by Strategic Lead Area, over the course of 2018/19, alongside corresponding year-end figures and associated year-end figures for 2017/2018 to allow comparison. The month on month reporting detailed in this table has not been updated to reflect retrospective updates/corrections to data collated on a monthly basis during the year. 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.

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

Service	Apr'18	May'18	Jun'18	Jul'18	Aug'18	Sept'18	Oct'18	Nov'18	Dec'18	Jan'19	Feb'19	Mar '19	2018/19 Total	2017/18 Total
<b>Strategic Management</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>1.58</b>	<b>1.43</b>	<b>1.58</b>	<b>4.59</b>	<b>0.00</b>
Child Healthcare & Criminal Justice	1.39	1.18	1.63	1.08	1.21	1.37	1.36	1.76	1.89	1.56	1.07	1.15	16.66	15.22
Community Health & Care	1.42	1.66	1.57	1.60	1.82	1.66	1.83	1.79	1.97	2.14	1.97	1.99	21.41	18.68
Finance and Resources	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Mental Health, Addiction & Learning Disabilities	1.02	1.10	1.42	1.44	0.99	1.37	1.04	1.45	1.23	0.94	0.88	1.40	14.28	16.14
Strategy, Planning & Health Improvement	0.51	0.39	0.28	0.58	0.37	0.08	0.85	0.75	0.09	0.48	0.50	2.28	7.15	2.54
<b>Health &amp; Social Care Partnership</b>	<b>1.34</b>	<b>1.46</b>	<b>1.53</b>	<b>1.46</b>	<b>1.56</b>	<b>1.52</b>	<b>1.61</b>	<b>1.71</b>	<b>1.82</b>	<b>1.83</b>	<b>1.61</b>	<b>1.74</b>	<b>19.19</b>	<b>17.26</b>
Environment & Neighbourhood	1.07	0.95	0.77	0.68	0.83	0.88	1.06	1.18	1.11	0.97	1.00	0.90	11.39	11.76
Housing & Employability	0.81	0.78	0.67	0.52	0.61	0.73	0.94	0.94	1.18	1.47	1.16	0.87	10.69	10.04
Regeneration	0.94	0.91	0.89	0.97	1.05	0.96	0.95	1.17	1.43	1.29	1.47	1.15	13.17	10.23
<b>Regeneration, Environment &amp; Growth</b>	<b>0.98</b>	<b>0.90</b>	<b>0.79</b>	<b>0.74</b>	<b>0.86</b>	<b>0.88</b>	<b>1.00</b>	<b>1.13</b>	<b>1.23</b>	<b>1.17</b>	<b>1.18</b>	<b>0.97</b>	<b>11.82</b>	<b>10.94</b>
Communications, Culture & Communities	0.57	0.64	0.60	0.46	0.79	1.16	0.51	0.69	1.01	0.75	0.66	1.01	8.84	5.29
Education Learning & Attainment (Support Staff)	0.60	0.85	0.56	0.20	0.49	0.88	0.88	1.37	1.24	1.02	1.00	1.03	10.13	9.65
People & Technology	0.23	0.16	0.03	0.14	0.38	0.52	0.30	0.64	0.28	0.31	0.01	0.20	3.21	5.16
Regulatory	0.24	0.79	0.49	0.36	0.23	0.27	0.11	0.08	0.13	0.37	0.37	0.25	3.69	3.75
Resources	0.54	0.47	0.61	0.70	0.65	0.86	1.11	1.02	1.07	1.09	1.09	1.05	10.26	7.66
<b>Transformation &amp; Public Service Reform (excl. Teachers) TOTAL</b>	<b>0.53</b>	<b>0.69</b>	<b>0.53</b>	<b>0.34</b>	<b>0.53</b>	<b>0.83</b>	<b>0.79</b>	<b>1.08</b>	<b>1.03</b>	<b>0.91</b>	<b>0.87</b>	<b>0.92</b>	<b>9.06</b>	<b>7.90</b>
Education Learning & Attainment (Teachers)	0.40	0.60	0.45	0.16	0.15	0.40	0.51	0.84	0.78	0.77	0.66	0.58	6.29	11.83
<b>Transformation &amp; Public Service Reform (Incl. Teachers) TOTAL</b>	<b>0.48</b>	<b>0.65</b>	<b>0.50</b>	<b>0.27</b>	<b>0.38</b>	<b>0.66</b>	<b>0.68</b>	<b>0.98</b>	<b>0.93</b>	<b>0.85</b>	<b>0.78</b>	<b>0.78</b>	<b>7.94</b>	<b>5.70</b>
<b>COUNCIL-WIDE TOTAL</b>	<b>0.83</b>	<b>0.92</b>	<b>0.84</b>	<b>0.69</b>	<b>0.80</b>	<b>0.93</b>	<b>1.00</b>	<b>1.20</b>	<b>1.23</b>	<b>1.18</b>	<b>1.10</b>	<b>1.07</b>	<b>11.78</b>	<b>10.67</b>

## **Housing & Employability Performance (Annual 2018/2019)**

**4.1** In 2018/19, 12188.14 days were lost due to sickness absence across Infrastructure Regeneration and Economic Development. This represents an increase of 458.24 FTE days (3.8%) lost compared to 2017/18. It should be noted that the number of FTE days lost within Environment and Neighbourhood reduced by 914.54 in comparison to 2017/18 but unfortunately Regeneration recorded a significant increase particularly within Building Services who did not sustain the improvement reported in the previous year.

**4.1.2** Table 2 shows the annual results and compares these to the same period last year, as well as stating the absence level for the service's best performance in recent years. Additionally, the table shows the CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development) benchmark for public sector absence. Absence for Housing and Employability was below the Council average of 11.52 FTE days lost per FTE employees however it was significantly higher than both the best year of performance in 2016/2017 and the CIPD benchmark.

Table 2 – Council / Strategic Lead Targets (Average days lost per FTE employee)

<b>Strategic Lead Area</b>	<b>Annual 2017/18</b>	<b>Annual 2018/19</b>	<b>Year on Year +/-</b>	<b>Best Annual Performance</b>	<b>Public Sector Benchmark 2018/19*</b>
<b>Council Wide</b>	<b>10.67</b>	<b>11.52</b>	<b>7.97%</b>	<b>8.86 (2016/17)</b>	<b>8.4</b>
<b>Environment &amp; Neighbourhood</b>	<b>11.76</b>	<b>10.38</b>	<b>-11.78%</b>	<b>10.38 (2018/19)</b>	
<b>Regeneration</b>	<b>10.23</b>	<b>13.72</b>	<b>+25.44%</b>	<b>10.23 (2017/18)</b>	

\*Source 2019 CIPD Health and Wellbeing at Work report

**4.1.3** This increase in sickness absence can be attributed to higher levels of absence reported during November 2018 to March 2019 as shown in Table 1 above.

### **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 3 below shows the top 3 reasons for absence in 2018/19 for the area covered by this report and compares these to the Council Wide results for the same period.

Table 3 – Reasons analysis – Service performances

	<b>1</b>		<b>2</b>		<b>3</b>	
	<b>Reason</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Reason</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Reason</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Council Wide</b>	<b>Minor Illness</b>	<b>21.89</b>	<b>Acute Medical</b>	<b>17.79</b>	<b>Musculo Skeletal</b>	<b>15.51</b>

			Conditions		Injuries	
<b>Environment &amp; Neighbourhood</b>	<b>Minor Illness</b>	<b>24.5</b>	<b>MSK</b>	<b>21.6</b>	<b>Acute Medical Condition</b>	<b>15.98</b>
<b>Regeneration</b>	<b>Minor Illness</b>	<b>22.65</b>	<b>MSK</b>	<b>23.29</b>	<b>Personal Stress</b>	<b>16.37</b>

**4.2.3** The top 3 reasons for absence in Environment and Neighbourhood mirror the Council wide reasons for absence although there is a higher incidence of minor illness and MSK conditions in Environment and Neighbourhood than there is Council wide. However, within Regeneration similar to 21017/18 Personal Stress is one of the top three reasons for absence albeit there has been some improvement year on year. For this reason, managers within this area will be included in the pilot for Head Torch training and will be focusing on improving mental health in the workplace and be promoting the support which is available to employees.

**4.2.4** To support employees, managers are encouraged to make early referrals to Physiotherapy in order to enable staff experiencing MSK problems to access support in a timely manner.

#### Absence Duration – Service Performance

**4.3** Table 4 shows the duration profile for both Environment and Neighbourhood and Regeneration and compares to the overall Council-wide duration profile. Long term absence accounted 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. Short term absence in both Environment and Neighbourhood and Regeneration is lower than that of the Council overall and long term absence has remained consistently high over the past few years with no significant increase or reduction in either.

Table 4 – 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>
<b>Environment &amp; Neighbourhood</b>	<b>10.89%</b>	<b>89.11%</b>	<b>11.64%</b>	<b>88.36%</b>
<b>Regeneration</b>	<b>14.9%</b>	<b>85.1%</b>	<b>11.47%</b>	<b>88.53%</b>

#### Employee Wellbeing Group

**4.4** 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 the 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, discounted leisure membership
- The new Disability Passport guidance was launched and is now available on the intranet. This guidance will complement 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 Trades 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 which is now being piloted in two further areas during the summer period. Additionally a session will also be delivered to Trades Union colleagues in April. A full evaluation of the programme will be completed following this pilot.
- A joint communication was developed with the Trades Unions which promotes the wide range of supports that are currently available; this was shared with Trades Union colleagues and managers. Trades 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 employees who wished to access their 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 who will support them to develop a care plan and provide dedicated mental health support. Further information is available on the Employee Wellbeing Intranet pages which have been updated to reflect this 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 these 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 device 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 Carer's group is also being undertaken as part of the EWG remit and based on feedback from those who attend and the Carer's 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 EWG to support employees.

- A wellbeing seminar was also delivered to the elected members highlighting the work of the Employee Working Group and explaining the new project management approach that will be adopted.
- A number of employees have been trained to be Mental Health First Aiders through training provided by our Trades Union colleagues. A promotion providing details of who these people are is now being planned to ensure that employees are aware of who they can approach for assistance within 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 there may be further support required to assist both managers and employees maintain their health and wellbeing in these services particularly during the winter period. However, sickness absence levels remain below the Council average.

## 6. Financial and Procurement Implications

- 6.1 Based on the estimated cost of a day's absence of £124, table 5 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 5 – Cost of absence

<b>Strategic Lead Area</b>	<b>Annual</b>
<b>Council</b>	<b>£6,464,375 (approx.)</b>
<b>Environment &amp; Neighbourhood</b>	<b>£808,425</b>
<b>Regeneration</b>	<b>£702,904</b>

- 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 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 Employee 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: 22 April 2019**

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**Appendices:** Appendix 1 Council Wide Annual 2018/2019 Absence Summary  
Appendix 2 Regeneration Annual 2018/2019 Absence Summary

**Background Papers:** None

**Wards Affected:** None