

TO: EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE – 19TH SEPTEMBER 2006

SUBJECT: SICKNESS ABSENCE MONITORING

FROM: CORPORATE PERSONNEL SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To present to Members the findings of the annual monitoring of sickness absence levels throughout the Council.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 This report summarises the key findings from an analysis of sickness absence during the year 1st April 2005 - 31st March 2006.

2.2 Appendix A breaks down by service areas the total number of working days lost due to sickness absence and shows the average number of working days lost per employee both with and without long-term sickness included in the calculations. It also shows a comparison with previous years. Please note: in line with BVPI monitoring requirements, from 2004/05 both the number of staff and number of sickness absence days lost are shown as full time equivalent (FTE).

2.3 Appendix B provides details of long-term sickness absence only.

2.4 Appendix C shows the reasons for sickness absence and compares this with the results of the West Midlands Local Government Association's survey for 2004/5.

2.5 Appendix D shows the size of each Service Area/Directorate as a percentage of the whole of WDC compared with the percentage of the total sickness absence for the year attributable to each unit.

2.6 Appendix E gives a five year comparison of both short and long-term sickness absence and a five year comparison of the number of long-term sickness cases.

2.7 Appendix F shows the national average sickness absence for the whole of the public and private sectors and presents the findings of the WMLGA regional survey for the year 2004/2005 (these figures are published one year in arrears).

2.8 Appendix G shows the BVPI trend over time compared with the top quartile.

3. MAIN POINTS FROM THE DATA

3.1 The total number of working days lost due to sickness absence from 1st April 2005 until 31st March 2006 was 4,530.6 which is an average of 9.19 days per employee (4% of working time) or 4.69 days if long-term sickness (20 days or

more) is taken out of the calculation.

- 3.2 The average number of days lost per employee increased by 1.23 over the previous year but decreased slightly when short-term only sickness absence is examined.
- 3.3 In 2005/2006 there were 33 cases of long-term sickness (6.7% of total staff) which accounted for a total of 2,220.3 days or 49% of all the absence for the year. On average, employees taking long-term sickness were absent for 67.28 days. The number of long-term cases increased by five (17.85%) over the previous year and the number of days lost due to long-term absence increased by 49.1%.
- 3.4 Eight (24.2%) of the individuals who took long-term sickness absence during the year have now left the Council's employment.
- 3.5 The reason attributed to 28.03 % of all long-term sickness (16.35% of total sickness absence) was stress, depression, mental health & fatigue. The WMLGA's National Survey recorded that this was the reason for 20.7% of all sickness absence in English and Welsh Local Authorities during 2004/05.
- 3.6 The other major causes of long-term sickness were chest & respiratory problems (12.25% of all long-term and 7.75% of total absence) and back, neck and other musculo-skeletal problems (11.67 of long-term and 12.31% of total absence). According to WMLGA's survey these reasons accounted for 5% and 22.5% of all sickness absence respectively for 2004/05.
- 3.7 When short-term only absence is examined the main recorded cause was infections (25.54% of all short-term absence).
- 3.8 28.85% of all sickness was attributed to reasons outside our reporting categories or non-specified reasons.
- 3.9 The CIPD reported that the average number of days lost due to sickness absence in 2004/05 was 10.3 for the whole of the public sector and 6.8 for the whole of the private sector.
- 3.10 The BVPI results for 2004/2005 showed that the West Midlands district council average was 9.9 days or 4.3%.

4. **ACTION**

- 4.1 More use to be made of the Capability Procedure in the early stages of long term absences where a return to work is unclear.
- 4.2 A review of the occupational health service in conjunction with other Warwickshire Districts and the County
- 4.3 Continuation of the implementation of the Stress at Work action plan with an

increased emphasis on staff well being

- 4.4 Improved management information to be provided once the personnel service is centralised to allow appropriate action to be taken by managers at a local level.

5. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 5.1 Members are asked to note the contents of this report and approve the proposed actions.

Karen Pearce
Assistant Chief Executive (Personnel)
July 2006

Background papers: Nil

Areas in District affected: None

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