

To: Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board

On: 21 August 2023

Report by: Director of Finance and Resources

Heading: Absence Statistics – Annual report 22/23 and Quarter 1 of 23/24.

1. Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board with the absence information for the period 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023. The report also provides absence performance by all services during quarter 1 covering the period 1st April to 30th June 2023.
- 1.2 During the reporting period 22/23, hybrid working continued to reduce the opportunities for transmission in office-based work activities.
- 1.3 Longer term absences continue to be impacted due to lengthier treatment and medical intervention waiting times.
- 1.4 The report details the absence statistics by service and by category of staff. The report provides information in relation to absence targets and how services have performed against them. An analysis of the reasons for absence has also been compiled and details are included within the report.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Board notes the content of this report.
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3. Background

3.1 The Scrutiny Board agreed that absence levels will be reported on a quarterly basis. It was agreed that the report will include the following information relating to supporting attendance: -

- Absence statistics broken down by service and category of staff.
- Reasons for absence broken down by service and category of staff.
- Progress made by services in relation to their supporting attendance action plans.

4. Sickness absence statistics for the period 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023 overview.




4.1 During the reporting period, Covid-19 restrictions were completely lifted quite quickly from most of the workplaces except the care sector; however, ventilation and hand washing remain key factors to reduce transmission.

4.2 The main presenting issues and their percentage of the overall presented absence figures for the year were:

- Psychological (29%)
- Respiratory (21%)
- Muscoskeletal (19%)

4.5 A comparison of the council overall absence performance for the years 21/22 and 22/23 is detailed in table 1. In line with the reporting requirements for Scottish Councils, absence is expressed as a number of workdays lost per full time equivalent (FTE) employee.




Table 1

Employee Group	21/22	22/23	Variance +/- year on year
Local Government	13.89	15.24	+ 1.35 
Teachers	5.9	7.44	+ 1.54 
Council Overall	11.29	13.21	+ 1.92 






5. Sickness absence statistics for quarter 1 - 1st April 2023 to 30 June 2023.

5.1 A comparison of the council overall absence performance for the quarter (Q1) is detailed in table 2. Table 3 details services performance. In line with the reporting requirements for Scottish Councils, absence is expressed as a number of workdays lost per full time equivalent (FTE) employee.

Table 2

Employee Group	Quarter Ending June 22	Quarter Ending June 23	Variance +/- year on year
Local Government	3.46	3.41	- 0.05 
Teachers	1.77	1.70	- 0.07 
Council Overall	3.02	2.97	- 0.05 

5.2 **Table 3**

Service	Quarter Ending June 22	Quarter Ending June 23	Variance +/- year on year
Chief Executives	1.50	1.14	- 0.36 
Childrens Services	2.69	2.56	- 0.13 
Environment, Housing, and Infrastructure*	N/A	3.50	N/A
Finance & Resource Services	1.76	2.37	+ 0.61 
Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership	5.04	4.60	- 0.44 
Council Overall	3.02	2.97	- 0.05 
Council Overall Target	2.60	2.60	n/a

*This is a new service with no previous data.

6. Sickiness absence targets analysis for quarter 1- 1st April 2023 to 30 June 2023.

- 6.1 The local government employee absence level of 3.41 days lost per FTE employee is **0.81 days above** the council target of 2.60 days.
- 6.2 In addition, the teacher absence level of 1.70 days lost per FTE employee is **0.16 days above** the council target of 1.54 days.
- 6.3 The council has recorded an overall absence rate of 2.97 days lost per FTE employee, which is **0.37 days above** the council target of 2.60 days.

7. Sickiness absence reasons and related support measures during quarter 1 - 1st April 2023 to 30th June 2023.

- 7.1 The main sickness absence reasons across the council presented in this quarter were:
- Psychological
 - Muscoskeletal
 - Stomach/bowel/blood and metabolic disorders

- 7.2 To support employees with psychological absences, the council provides a range of support services that employees can be referred to at an early stage for assistance, such as the council's Occupational Health Service and the Time for Talking employee counselling service.
- 7.3 The Time for Talking (TFT) counselling service provides 24-hour confidential support to employees with a range of personal health and well-being issues. It operates a flexible approach to appointments offering telephone consultations in the early mornings or evenings as well as throughout the day.
- 7.4 **69** new referrals were made and a total of **294** referrals offered during the reporting period. This generated an attendance rate of 85%. The main presenting issues are detailed below:



Personal

Stress/anxiety/depression
 Family Relationships
 Change
 Self-harm
 Anger



Work & Personal

Stress/anxiety/depression
 Retirement/Redundancy



Work related.

Role (the understanding of)
 Change
 Relationships (manager or colleagues)

- 7.5 Telephone consultations remain the most requested type of intervention, however more face to face appointments are being requested. During the reporting period TFT responded to 2 critical incidents.
- 7.6 HR and OD work in collaboration with NHS colleagues, to offer safeTalk and ASIST courses on suicide awareness and prevention as well as anxiety awareness courses. We also promote the "Doing Well" service which supports employees with depression and low moods.
- 7.7 The Physiotherapy service supports employees with Muscoskeletal and Joint Disorder conditions through the council's Occupational Health Service. The service has continued to be provided throughout the quarter using secure face to face appointments, video conferencing and telephone consultations.
- 7.8 The council's usage of the Occupational Health Service (OHS) for quarter 1 was **972** appointments. OHS provides advice and guidance on the impact of ill health on work and what steps the council and/or the employee may make in

order to secure a return to work. The main appointment types are detailed in table 4 below:

Appointment referral type	Number	Main types of intervention
Wellbeing	377	CBT/DBT/Physiotherapy.
Management	442	Presenting health condition advice and guidance.
Health surveillance	153	Audio/ Hand arm vibration.

7.9 We continue with our occupational health surveillance programme, offering audiometry, spirometry, hand arm vibration screening, and nightshift questionnaires. We have not reported new occupational diseases to the Health and Safety Executive.

8. Measures to support attendance at work

8.1 A number of measures being progressed to support attendance at work, include the following: -

- We have reviewed our absence policy and we are developing, with the support of the corporate communications team, an engagement and training plan.
- To link with the engagement plan, we are currently redesigning the current supporting absence training courses, ensuring managers are fully equipped to manage staff absence and take accountability for their absence status.
- We continue to develop, with support of the Business World Team, a suite of appropriate reports to enable managers to analyse their absence data. This will also provide an opportunity to increase the frequency of reporting sickness absence information to the Corporate Management Team.
- Throughout the reporting period, HR and OD have been working with service management teams to focus upon the absence data and look at interventions to support their staff. The biggest focus has been on the reduction of longer-term cases.
- In collaboration with the communications and marketing service, regular information and guidance continues to be issued, particularly around well-being issues. The last campaign focussed on the employee counselling service.
- Throughout the reporting period, HR and OD have been promoting the employee benefits scheme, which includes cycle to work. This may encourage employees to become active and healthier, which may help reduce spells of absence.
- We continue to link the supporting attendance measures to our Health and Wellbeing Strategy development, which supports the People strategy.
- As part of the council's health and safety management system, occupations which include manual handling activities as part of the role, require task risk

assessments. These risk assessments are reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure that safe working practices are maintained.

- We are currently reviewing our workplace stress risk assessment process and guidance.

Implications of this Report

- 1 **Financial Implications** - Improvement in attendance impacts on the financial costs of absence.
- 2 **HR and Organisational Development Implications** - HR and Organisational Development Practitioners will continue to work with service managers and consult with the Trade Unions, on the implementation of the Supporting Attendance at Work Policy and Guidance and initiatives detailed in this report.
- 3 **Community Planning**

Children and Young People - none.

Jobs and the Economy - none.

Community care, health, and wellbeing - provides for continuous improvement in health and attendance.

Safer and Stronger - provides for improved service performance across the Council.

Greener - none.

Empowering our communities - none.
- 4 **Legal Implications** - none.
- 5 **Property/Asset Implications** - none.
- 6 **Information Technology Implications** - none.
- 7 **Equality and Human Rights Implications** - none.
- 8 **Health and Safety Implications** - it is integral to the Council's aim of securing the health and well-being of employees.
- 9 **Procurement Implications** - none.
- 10 **Risk Implications** - Without continued effective supporting attendance focus, there is a risk that sickness absence levels will adversely impact on the Council both financially and in terms of service delivery. Consequently, supporting attendance activities are monitored via the Corporate Risk Register.
- 11 **Privacy Impact Implications** - none.
12. **Cosla Policy Position** – none

13. **Climate Risk** - none

List of Background Papers - none.

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