Scotland Excel

To: **Executive Sub-Committee**

On: **23 April 2021**

Report by:
Chief Executive of Scotland Excel

Employee Absence Management Report

1. Introduction and purpose of the report

In response to the Renfrewshire Council Internal Audit team recommendation, this report on organisational sickness absence is submitted on a quarterly basis highlighting the absence rate in the organisation.

2. Scotland Excel Absence Management Target

The Joint Committee has previously agreed that Scotland Excel should work to an absence rate of below 4%. This target aligns Scotland Excel with partner organisations, supports good practice in this area and demonstrates the ongoing commitment to absence management as a key efficiency target.

3. Overview of Attendance

In line with audit recommendations, the attached report has been prepared for the Executive Sub Committee. The report details:

- Breakdown of current month, last six months and last 12 months absence figures
- Illustration of 12 months in days
- Illustration of last 12 months in percentages

The report includes the latest absence details for the period to 31 March 2021. The rate of absence across the organisation has generally been maintained at or below the 4% target, with the exception of August 2020, where the absence rate rose to 5% and March 2021, where the absence rate rose to 5.1% due to a number of long-term absences. The rolling 6 and 12 month average absence rates have maintained at or below 3.2%.

The absence rates for the reporting periods as shown in appendix 1 are:

- previous 1 month to 5.1% (93.5 days)
- previous 6 months to 3.0% (291.5 days
- previous 12 months to 3.2% (610.5 days)

While Scotland Excel has been successful in reducing the average number of sickness absence days per employee over recent years, the COVID-19 pandemic has had an adverse impact on the 2020/21 average sickness days per employee figure compared to the same period in 2019/20 (6.6 days per employee in 2020/21 compared to 4.1 days per employee in 2019/20).
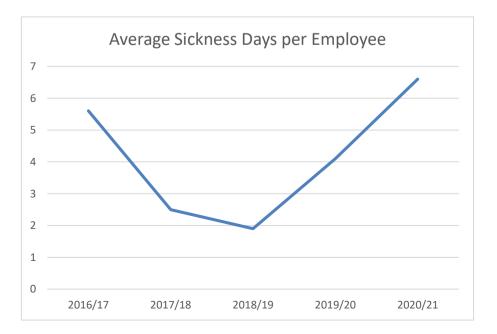
In particular, the Covid-19 pandemic appears to have had an adverse impact on the mental wellbeing of staff with the predominant cause of long-term sickness absence being reported as mental ill health. While the pandemic has not been the primary cause of absence, it has been identified as a contributory factor in a number of cases. Long term sickness absence is recorded when an employee reaches 20 working days consecutive sickness absence.

The impact of the pandemic can also be evidenced when comparing the absence pattern from the previous 12 months and how it has changed. Short-term sickness absence days recorded by Scotland Excel staff shows a reduction year on year from 181.5 days to 56.5 days. However, over the same period, long-term sickness absence days recorded have increased from 216 days to 554 days.

March 2021 shows a particular spike in long-term absences. At the end of the month the organisation was supporting 4 members of staff who have cited mental ill health as the cause of their absence, all of which have triggered the long-term absence category. All are being supported through a range of interventions including Occupational Health referral, Counselling Services, and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) sessions. Following effective support by the organisation, all 4 members of staff are anticipating a return to work shortly.

In addition to supporting members of staff absent through ill health, Scotland Excel continues positive early intervention practices including working with Occupational Health and other support services to maintain employee attendance and to support members of staff who may be experiencing difficulties while remaining at work.

The graph below shows average sickness days per employee within Scotland Excel over the past 5 years.

4. Recommendation

The Executive Sub Committee is requested to note the contents of report.

Appendix 1

Absence Report
Organisation Level
Month Ending: 31 March 2021

SCOTLAND EXCEL

	Current Month					Last 6 Months					Last 12 Months				
	Self Certified Sick	Doctor Certified Sick	Total Sick Leave	Sickness Absence Rate	Sickness Absence Instances	Self Certified Sick	Doctor Certified Sick	Total Sick Leave	Sickness Absence Rate	Sickness Absence Instances	Self Certified Sick	Doctor Certified Sick	Total Sick Leave	Sickness Absence Rate	Sickness Absence Instances
Total:	16.5	77	93.5	5.1%	4	32.5	259	291.5	3.0%	14	56.5	554	610.5	3.2%	24

No of Employees (Permanent and Temporary): 93   Average no of Sickness Absence Days per Employee: 6.6

No of Leavers included: 9

Total Sickness Absence Days by Month for Last 12 Months

Month	Value
Apr	42.0
May	34.0
Jun	44.0
Jul	63.0
Aug	77.0
Sep	59.0
Oct	56.0
Nov	26.0
Dec	42.0
Jan	25.0
Feb	49.0
Mar	93.5

Monthly YTD Absence Rate

Month	Rate
Apr	2.6%
May	2.3%
Jun	2.5%
Jul	3.9%
Aug	5.0%
Sep	4.0%
Oct	3.5%
Nov	1.6%
Dec	3.0%
Jan	1.6%
Feb	3.1%
Mar	5.1%

Baseline