

Scotland Excel

To: Executive Sub-Committee

On: 17 September 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.

In addition to adhering to the recommendation, this report also provides members with further information on how Scotland Excel is engaging with staff to support attendance and staff well-being related to mental health.

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 August 2021. The rate of absence across the organisation has generally been maintained at or below the 4% target, with the exception of 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 3.6%.

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

- previous 1 month to 2.6% (40 days)
- previous 6 months to 3.6% (341.5 days)
- previous 12 months to 3.2% (598.5 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 (6.2 days per employee in 2020/21 compared to 5.5 days per employee in 2019/20).

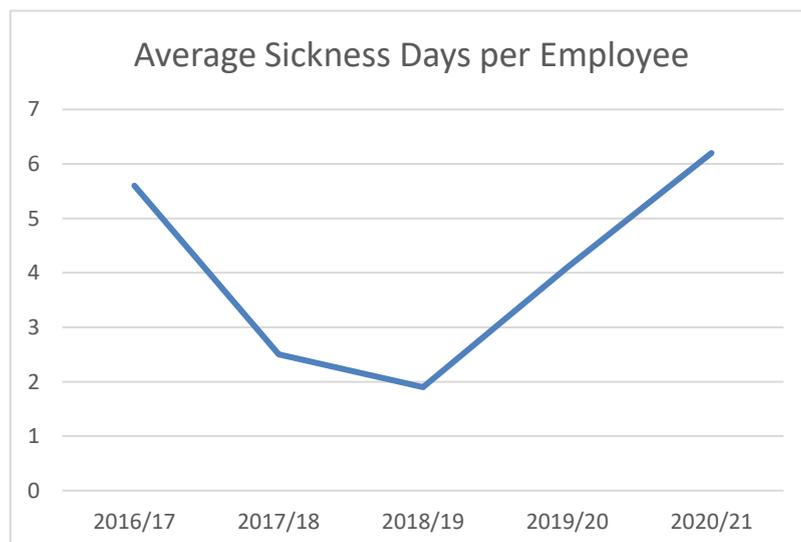
In particular, the Covid-19 pandemic appears to have had an adverse impact on the mental wellbeing of staff with the predominant cause of long-term sickness absence being reported as mental ill health. While the pandemic has not been the primary cause of absence, it has been identified as a contributory factor in a number of cases. Long term sickness absence is recorded when an employee reaches 20 working days consecutive sickness absence. A number of staff have also tested positive for Covid-19 during the reported period.

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 146.5 days to 71.5 days. However, over the same period, long-term sickness absence days recorded have increased from 384 days to 527 days.

March 2021 shows a particular spike in long-term absences. At the end of that month the organisation was supporting 4 members of staff who had identified mental ill health (medically certified) as the cause of their absence, all of which had triggered the long-term absence support process. All were 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 have made a successful return to work.

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. Supporting Mental Health

Scotland Excel prides itself on the employee support which is already available to all employees of the organisation whether at work or absent due to ill health. These supports include access to Occupational Health, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Counselling, weekly Well-being emails, flexible working, regular contact with line managers and a generous annual leave entitlement.

In addition to these existing supports, Scotland Excel has signed up to the *Mental Health at Work Commitment*.

The Mental Health at Work Commitment is a simple framework that builds on what Scotland Excel already provides for its staff. The Mental Health at Work Commitment provides a roadmap to assist the organisation achieve better outcomes in relation to the Mental Health for its employees.

The Mental Health at Work Commitment is based around 6, “Thriving at Work” standards which are:

1. Prioritise mental health in the workplace by developing and delivering a systematic programme of activity
2. Proactively ensure work design and organisational culture drive positive mental health outcomes
3. Promote an open culture around mental health
4. Increase organisational confidence and capability
5. Provide mental health tools and support
6. Increase transparency and accountability through internal and external reporting.

In addition to providing a framework to guide actions, the Mental Health at Work standard also provides a range of resources and information which will assist Scotland Excel in fulfilling its commitment.

Scotland Excel Mental Health at Work Commitment Action Plan

An action plan to support the Mental Health at Work commitment has already been developed by Scotland Excel and includes a wide range of actions including the following:

- 14 members of staff will be trained as accredited Mental Health First Aiders by 30 Sept 2021
- 11 Senior Managers have received training from SAMH on “Managing Mental Health in the Workplace”
- Mental Health Awareness training will be available to all staff from 01 October 2021
- All staff will take part in the MIND “Wellness Action Plan” during their next PRD session
- Mental Health resource page will be developed on the Staff Intranet giving advice and providing links to mental health support practices and websites along with identifying all Mental Health First Aiders across the organisation.

5. Recommendation

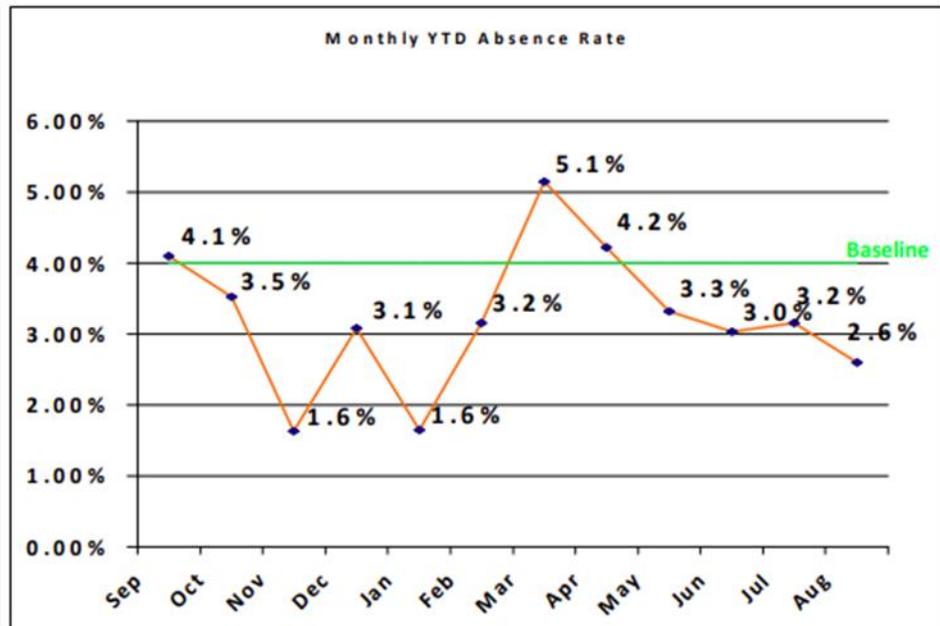
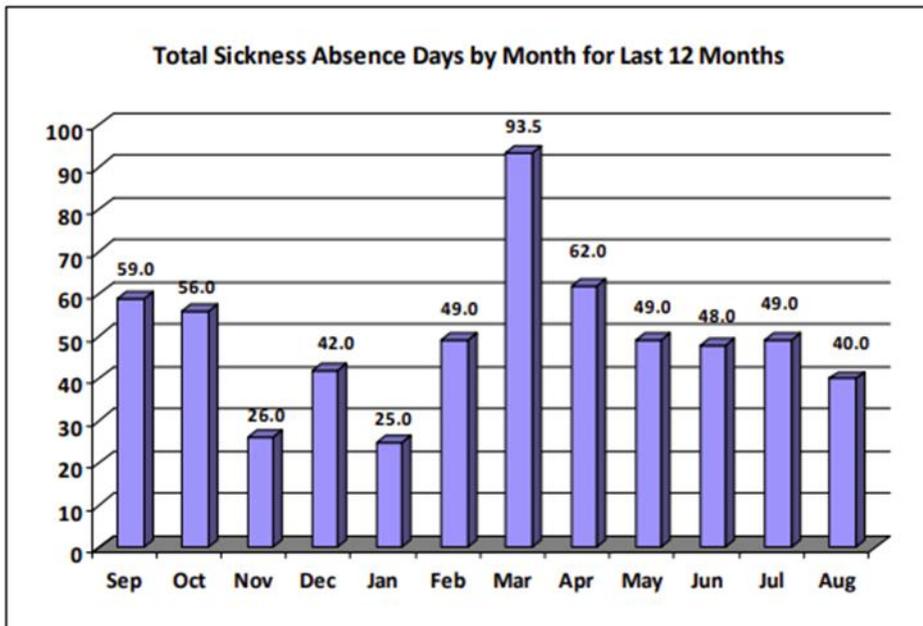
The Executive Sub Committee is requested to note the contents of report.

Absence Report

Organisation Level

Month Ending: 31 August 2021

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: 6	34	40	2.6%	3	53.5	288	341.5	3.6%	24	71.5	527	598.5	3.2%	35
No of Employees (Permanent and Temporary): 96					Average no of Sickness Absence Days per Employee: 6.2									
No of Leavers included: 9														



Sickness Absence Report

Breakdown of Sickness Absence Days by Month

Month Ending: 31 August 2021

