
MAXIMISING ATTENDANCE: COUNCIL PERFORMANCE JULY – SEPTEMBER 2016

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report describes the Council's absence performance during the quarter July - September 2016. The report also provides the national context in terms of absence performance and the support provided to employees and managers to assist them to maximise attendance at Argyll and Bute Council. The key points are:
- This quarter shows positive performance across the council, better than the target
 - The council's performance is better than the same quarter last year
 - Argyll and Bute Council is performing better than the national trend
 - The council's ranking improved by 3 places in national benchmarking data
 - We have confirmation that we are already following good practice
 - Progress has been made on implementing more corporate improvement actions in the last quarter
 - Further corporate improvement actions are planned
- 1.2 In the quarter July – September 2016 the absence figures illustrate a positive picture for Argyll and Bute Council as a whole. The Council recorded a performance better than the target set with the total work days lost per FTE employee at 2.18 against a target of 2.37. Against the same quarter last year the Council reports a better performance in terms of total work days lost per FTE employee - 2.18 against 2.23 last year.
- 1.3 The CIPD Annual Survey Report on Absence Management (2015) reports an overall increase in the number of work days lost to absence in all of the organisations surveyed in the year 2014/15. They also highlight that the average number of work days lost has increased the most in the public sector organisations surveyed and that it is more likely to be higher in larger organisations. In that respect, Argyll and Bute is performing better than the national trend.
- 1.4 The local government benchmarking information available from the Improvement Service reports that the average work days lost per FTE for local government employees across Scotland was 10.80 in 2014/15 (2015/16 data not yet available). This was a 4.5% increase on the previous year. During the same period Argyll and Bute Council's increase was well below this at 2.6%. The council's ranking has improved by 3 places between 2013/14 to 2014/15.
- 1.5 Argyll & Bute Council is committed to maximising attendance and has set a target to reduce the total work days lost by 6%, during the period 2016/17. The Council has ensured that there are a range of appropriate management tools and information available for Services and individual managers to assist them to achieve their maximising attendance targets. It

also recognises the importance of employee wellbeing and its impact on individuals, the community and service delivery and has therefore put in place a whole range of measures to support employees. The report details these and future proposals to support the Council to achieve its attendance targets.

- 1.6 There are different patterns and fluctuations of performance across different services, and these are detailed in the report. Overall the trend over the last 3 years is gradually decreasing.
- 1.7 The cost of sick pay in the period July – September 2016 was £678,292. This is a significant reduction in cost in comparison with the same quarter last year which was £749,792.
- 1.8 The top three reasons for absence in the period July - September 2016 were Stress/Depression/Mental Health/Fatigue 28%, Medical Treatment 15% and Other Musculo-skeletal problems 12%. The CIPD Annual Survey Report on Absence Management (2015) highlights that the public sector is more likely to rank stress/mental health issues in their top 5 causes of absence. Overall, three fifths of respondents to the survey reported that stress has increased as a reason for absence over the past year and this rose to half of all respondents in all public sector organisations surveyed.
- 1.9 The percentage of return to work interviews completed in the reporting period was 81%.
- 1.10 Overall the report highlights:
 - Progress
 - Cost, Cause and Trends
 - Improvement Actions

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that the PRS Committee:

- (i) Note the content of this report.
- (ii) Note that the measures the council has put in place to maximise attendance are resulting in positive progress against a deteriorating national picture

MAXIMISING ATTENDANCE: COUNCIL PERFORMANCE APRIL - JUNE 2016

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Performance Review and Scrutiny (PRS) Committee on the Council's performance against targets and performance indicators for Maximising Attendance during the period July - September 2016.

3 RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 It is recommended that the PRS Committee
- (i) Note the content of this report.
 - (ii) Note that the measures the council has put in place to manage attendance are resulting in positive progress against a deteriorating national picture

4 DETAIL**4.1 National Picture**

The CIPD Annual Survey Report on Absence Management (2015) reports an overall increase in the number of work days lost to absence in all of the organisations they surveyed. They highlight that the average number of work days lost has increased the most in the public sector organisations surveyed and that it is more likely to be higher in larger organisations.

The report also highlights that the public sector is more likely to rank stress/mental health issues in their top 5 causes of absence. Overall, three fifths of respondents to the survey reported that, stress as a reason, for absence has increased over the past year and this rose to half of all respondents in all public sector organisations surveyed.

The local government benchmarking information available from the Improvement Service reports that the average days lost per FTE for local government employees across Scotland was 10.80 in 2014/15 (2015/16 data not yet available). This was a 4.5% increase on the previous year. During the same period Argyll and Bute Council's increase was well below this at 2.6%. The council's ranking has improved by 3 places between 2013/14 to 2014/15.

4.2 Argyll & Bute Council's commitment to Maximising Attendance

Argyll & Bute Council is committed to maximising attendance and has set an overall target to reduce the total work days lost by 6%, during the period 2016/17. Each Department and individual Service has been set a target reflecting this.

- 4.2.1 The Improvement and HR Service has ensured that there are a range of appropriate management tools and information available for Services and individual managers to assist them to achieve their maximising attendance targets. It also recognises the

importance of employee wellbeing and its impact on individuals, the community and service delivery and has therefore put in place a range of measures to support employees.

4.2.2 The following measures continue to support Services in achieving their maximising attendance targets:

- Online guidance, e-learning and resources on the Hub including guidance on how to conduct attendance review meetings and how to implement reasonable adjustments and phased returns to work.
- Issue of monthly management information reports to Heads of Service and Directors outlining performance on return to work interviews and employees who have met attendance triggers.
- Occupational Health support including provision of periodic local clinics.
- Support and guidance from the HR advice line and HR Officers where appropriate. This includes the opportunity to talk through what managers might want to cover before holding any meetings with employees or what they might want to put in an OHP referral as well as attendance at meetings in a coaching role where appropriate.
- Emails to notify managers when an employee has met a trigger and what action is required.
- Emails to notify managers when an employee begins/ ends sick leave.
- An additional HR Assistant continues to support Community Services and Development & Infrastructure with their absence.
- The Council's Healthy Working Lives group continue to promote awareness amongst staff on a number of health issues.
- Availability of the E-learning module for the Maximising Attendance procedures on LEON.
- Employee Counselling Service provided by PAM Assist is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year for confidential life management and personal support.

4.2.3 **Improvement Actions since last quarter**

Argyll and Bute Council is continually committed to being proactive and creative in its approach to maximising attendance. Recently the Council has put in place following new measures to support services to achieve their maximising attendance targets:

- The Managers' My View Dashboard has been upgraded to provide the following:
 - Managers can view their team and individual employee absence details.
 - A team calendar is available to allow managers to view their entire team's absence over specific time periods.
 - Managers can now also run their own reports on absence management triggers:
 - 3 or more occurrences of absence in a 12 month period
 - 10 or more days absence in a 12 month period
 - Return to work interviews completed/outstanding

This improvement will allow managers to access real time information on absence. Previously this information had been provided by HR to Directors and Heads of Service to disseminate to their managers on a monthly basis. It is anticipated that this will assist managers to take timely action to manage absence within their teams and improve efficiency of employee information management.

4.2.4 **Reducing Stress in the Workplace Policy and Procedures**

The Reducing Stress in the Workplace Policy and Procedure was approved by Council on 29th September and launched on 1 October 2016. This procedure promotes the use of the Stress Risk Assessment which is a useful tool for breaking down stress into its component parts. It is a good basis on which to have a discussion with the employee around what action could be taken to mitigate the risk of stress impacting on their health and wellbeing and prevent stress related absence. There are also a variety of resources alongside this to assist managers and employees such as e-learning, a personal resilience assessment tool and links to other sources of support.

4.2.5 **Mental Health First Aiders**

Four individuals were trained as Mental Health First Aiders in September 2016. This training offers basic general information about mental health problems. The knowledge presented and understanding developed in the course helps to remove stigma and fear and to give confidence in approaching a person in distress.

4.2.6 **Ongoing Improvement Actions**

IHR continues to progress actions to improve our approach to maximising attendance through continually seeking best practice for adoption. The following actions are underway:

- A member of the HR & OD team attended a Holyrood Policy day entitled Supporting Mental Health at Work in September 2016. The day covered an up to date brief on the scale of mental ill health at work, the factors that contribute to it and practical strategies based on good practice for how to support mental health wellbeing in the workplace. This day highlighted that Argyll and Bute Council already adopts a lot of the current good practice and highlighted some opportunities for improvement including:
 - further promotion of alternative ways of working,
 - consideration of becoming a “See Me Partner in Work” demonstrating the Council’s commitment to mental health wellbeing within the workplace
 - networking with other local authorities sharing good practice.
- Reviewing the Maximising Attendance procedures.

4.2.7 **Occupational Health**

The current contracts for the Occupational Health Service and Employee Counselling provision are due to end in January 2017. HR & OD are in the process of tendering for these contracts to ensure continued good quality advice and guidance is available for managers managing absence and to ensure our employees are supported during periods of ill health.

4.3 **Absence Performance July – September 2016**

Table one outlines the performance of each service against the quarterly targets set at the beginning of the year and the against the last two year’s performance in the same quarter. It should be noted that absence trends show fluctuations across the quarters. Historically, council wide absence figures have dipped in Quarter two and peaked in Quarter four with the exception of services dominated by term-time staff.

Table One: Performance July - September 2016

Service	Target WDL per FTE Employee 16/17	WDL per FTE Employee in Q2 16/17	WDL per FTE Employee in Q2 15/16	WDL per FTE employee in Q2 14/15	% Change from Q2 15/16
Adult Care	4.10	4.72	4.53	4.72	0.04
Children & Families	3.15	2.30	3.08	3.65	-0.25
TOTAL HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE PARTNERSHIP	3.78	3.96	4.01	4.35	-0.01
Community & Culture	1.50	1.26	1.60	1.91	-0.21
Education (Non Teaching)	2.15	1.77	1.61	1.18	0.10
Teachers	1.63	1.05	1.18	1.58	-0.11
TOTAL COM SERV (INCLUDING TEACHING)	1.80	1.32	1.38	1.30	-0.04
Customer and Support	1.50	2.01	1.55	0.90	0.30
Governance and Law	1.50	1.24	1.65	0.61	-0.25
Facility Services	2.28	1.69	1.93	2.69	-0.12
Improvement and HR	1.50	1.39	2.32	3.54	-0.40
TOTAL CUSTOMER SERVICES	1.93	1.72	1.87	2.01	-0.08
Economic Development	1.50	1.89	1.70	2.05	0.11
Planning and Regulatory Services	1.90	1.97	1.70	1.93	0.16
Performance & Business Improvement	1.50	1.94	5.04	2.72	-0.62
Roads and Amenity Services	3.60	3.66	4.09	2.87	-0.11
TOTAL DEV & INFRASTRUCTURE	3.03	3.12	3.40	2.58	-0.08
TOTAL CHIEF EXEC UNIT	1.50	1.95	0.58	1.38	2.36
COUNCIL TOTAL	2.37	2.18	2.23	2.29	-0.02

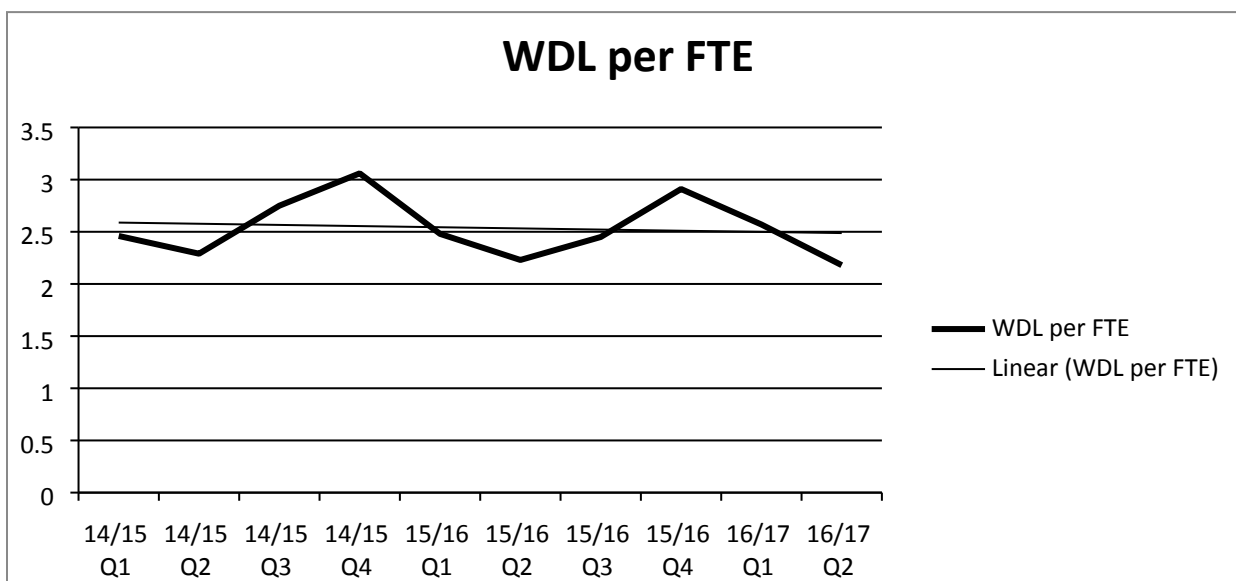
Table One illustrates a positive picture for the Council as a whole. The Council recorded a performance better than the target set with the total work days lost per FTE employee at 2.18 against a target of 2.37.

Against the same quarter last year the Council reports an improvement in absence; reporting a similar performance in terms of total work days lost per FTE employee - 2.18 against 2.23 last year.

Seven services out of fourteen (shaded in the above table) have met or improved on their target this quarter and eight have improved upon their performance against the same quarter last year (these have a negative figure in the % change column). The majority of those services that did not improve experienced only very small increases in absence of less than 0.5%.

4.4 Graph One below outlines the Council's performance in each quarter over the last 3 years.

Graph One: Overall Council Performance in each quarter over the last 3 years

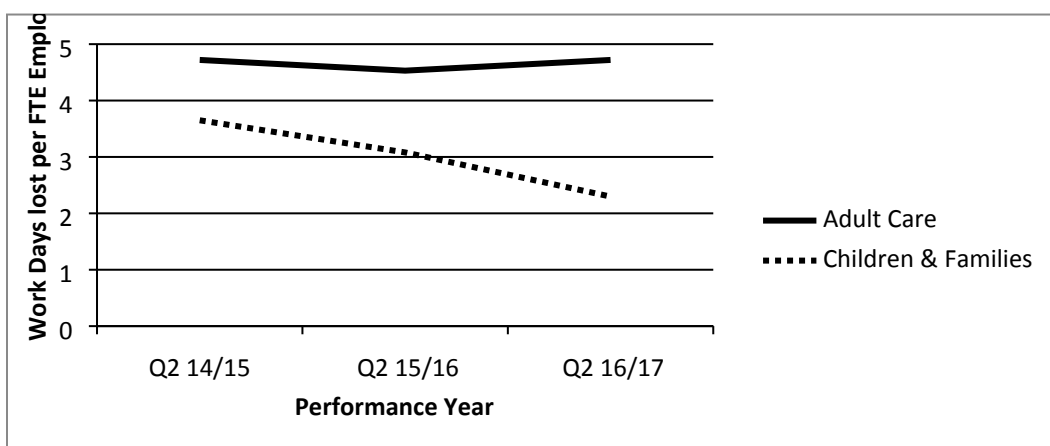


The overall trend (shown by the linear trend line) is positive indicating a decreasing average days lost per FTE over the last 3 years.

Performance in years 2014/15 and 2015/16 show a similar trend in WDL per FTE with a dip in quarter two of around 0.2 WDL per FTE. Performance in quarter two in 2016/17 also replicates this. In quarter 3 in years 2014/15 and 2015/16 the graph shows an increase in absence reaching its highest level in quarter four each year. This reflects the period in the year when winter viruses are common.

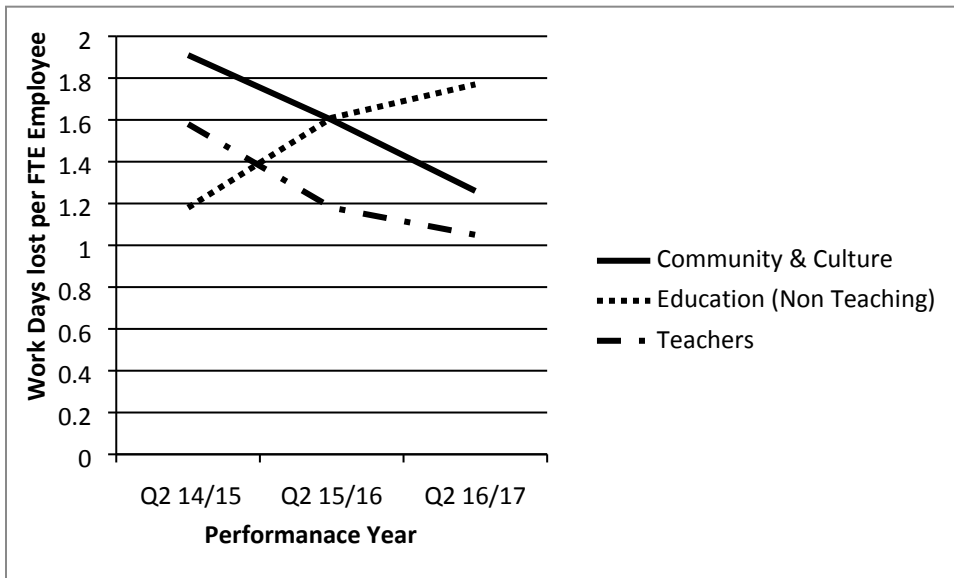
4.5 Graphs Two to Five below outline the performance of each service in quarter two over the last 3 years.

Graph Two: Health and Social Care Partnership Absence Trend



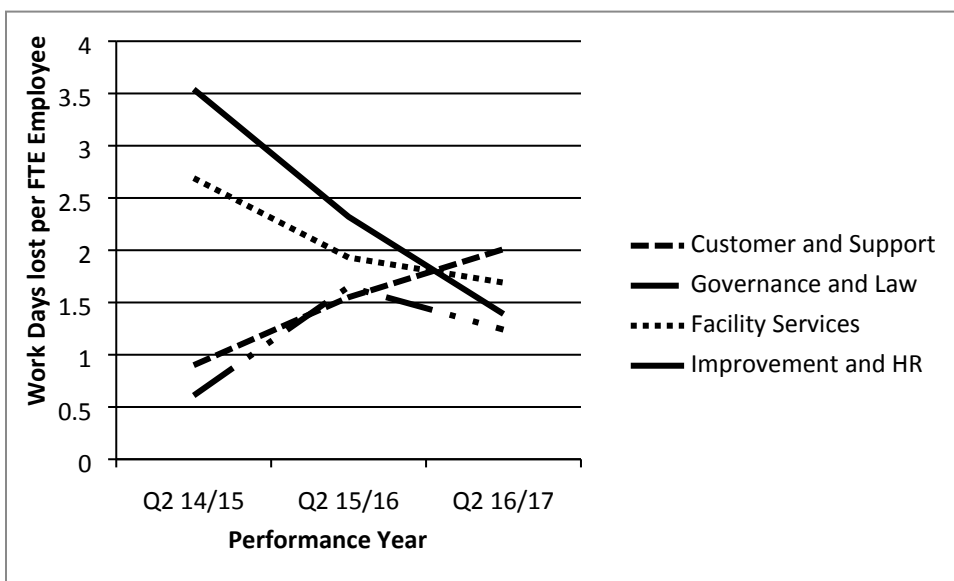
Children & Families are showing a consistent downwards trend. Adult Care's absence trend has remained fairly stationary.

4.6 **Graph Three: Community Services Absence Trend**



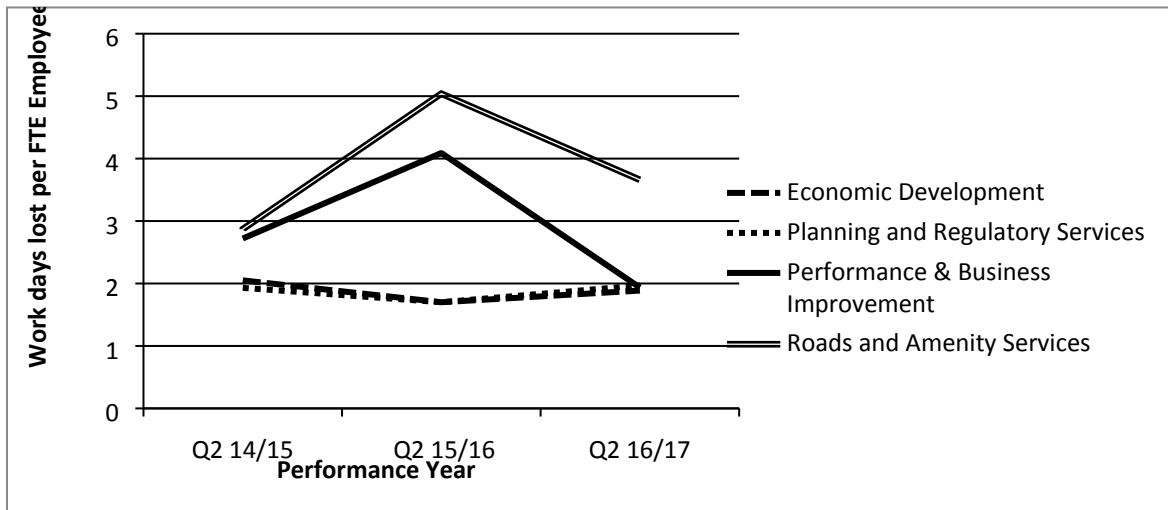
Teachers' absence is showing a steady downwards trend. Education (Non –Teaching) has shown a steady increase. Community & Culture has shown a decrease and then a slight increase.

4.7 **Graph Four: Customer Services Absence Trend**



Facility Services and Improvement & HR have shown a consistent downwards trend. Customer & Support have shown a consistent upwards trend. Governance & Law had a peak in absence in 2015/16 which has decreased slightly in 2016/17. Governance and Law and Improvement and HR are smaller services, whose performance can be adversely impacted by a small number of absences.

4.8 **Graph Five: Development & Infrastructure Trend**



Roads & Amenity Services show a peak in their absence in 2015/16 and then a sharp decrease in 16/17. Performance & Business Improvement has a similar trend with an absence peak in 2015/16 then a dramatic decrease in 16/17. Planning & Regulatory Services and Economic Development’s absence has remained fairly static.

4.9 **Cost of Absence**

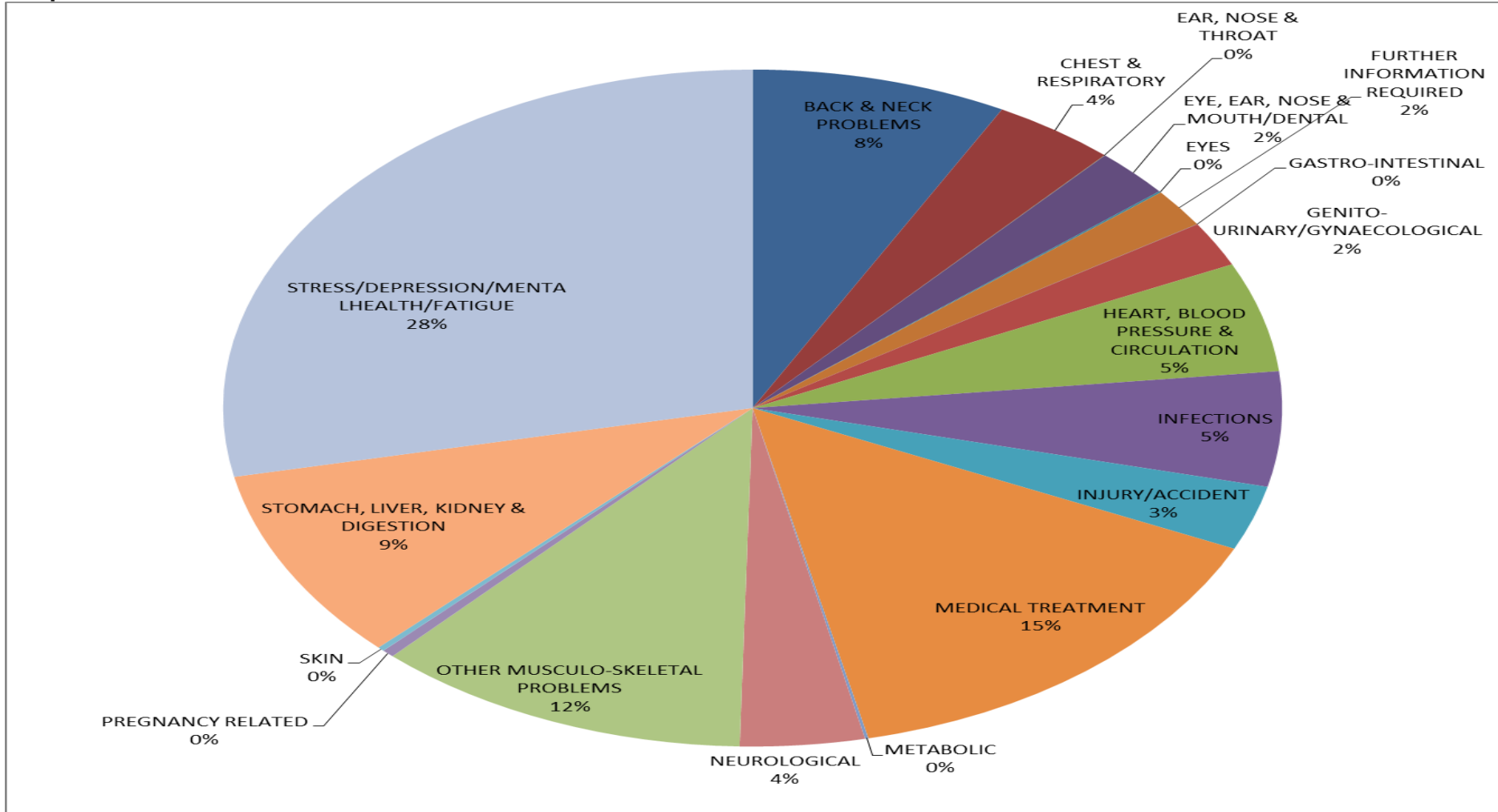
The table below outlines the actual cost of sick pay paid by each service of the Council during July - September 2016. The total cost for sick pay is £678,292 which is a significant decrease on the same quarter last year where the cost was £749,792. This table highlights services with the highest overall cost and cost per FTE indicates comparative cost between services. Those with the highest cost per FTE are Adult Care, Children & Families and Roads and Amenity Services.

Table Two: Sick pay by Service July - September 2016

Service	16/17 Q2 Cost	16/17 Q2 Cost per FTE £
Adult Care	£170,108	£374
Children & Families	£48,280	£231
TOTAL HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE PARTNERSHIP	£218,388	£329
Community & Culture	£17,461	£90
Education (Non Teaching)	£66,293	£107
Teachers	£134,854	£143
TOTAL COM SERV (INCLUDING TEACHING)	£218,608	£125
Customer and Support	£33,906	£156
Governance and Law	£6,619	£132
Facility Services	£33,097	£98
Improvement and HR	£8,542	£106
TOTAL CUSTOMER SERVICES	£82,164	£120
Economic Development	£11,058	£162
Planning and Regulatory Services	£21,009	£195
Performance & Business Improvement	£4,442	£131
Roads and Amenity Services	£111,314	£238
TOTAL DEV & INFRASTRUCTURE	£147,823	£218
TOTAL CHIEF EXEC UNIT	£11,309	£153
COUNCIL TOTAL	£678,292	£176

4.10 Absence Reasons

Graph Six: Reasons for Absence Q2 2016/17



- 4.11 Graph 6 shows the breakdown of the reasons for absence in the quarter July – September 2016. Table Five below gives more detail on the top four reasons for absence and compares this with the same quarter last year.

Table Five: Reasons for Absence Comparison Q2 2015/16 against Q2 2016/17

Reason for Absence	Q2 2015/16 Council Total %	Q2 2016/17 Council Total %	% change
STRESS/DEPRESSION/MENTALHEALTH/FATIGUE	25	28	11
MEDICAL TREATMENT	15	15	0
OTHER MUSCULO-SKELETAL PROBLEMS	11	12	8
STOMACH, LIVER, KIDNEY & DIGESTION	9	9	0

The top 3 reasons for sickness absence across the Council during Q2 of 2016/17 were Stress/Depression/Mental Health/Fatigue (28%), Medical Treatment (15%) and Other Musculo-skeletal Problems (12%). In comparison with the same quarter last year the rank order has remained the same but there has been an increase in the number of employees reporting absent due to Stress related illness to 28%, from 25% and Other Musculo-skeletal from 11% to 12%.

Supporting employees who are suffering from mental health issues remains a focus for Argyll and Bute Council. As outlined in section 4.2 the Council has an Employee Counselling Service provided by PAM Assist which is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year for confidential life management and personal support.

The Council has also introduced a Reducing Stress in the Workplace Policy and Procedure, which was approved by Council on 29 September. This promotes the use of the Stress Risk Assessment which is a useful tool for breaking down stress into its component parts. It is a good basis on which to form a discussion with the employee around what action could be taken to mitigate the risk of stress impacting on their health and wellbeing, before it leads to absence. There are also a variety of resources alongside this to assist both managers and employees such as e-learning, a personal resilience assessment tool and links to other sources of support.

- 4.12 In addition, four individuals were trained as Mental Health First Aiders in September 2016. This area is also the focus of future proposals to support employees. Following a member of the HR & OD team attending a Holyrood Policy day entitled Supporting Mental Health at Work in September 2016 which highlighted that Argyll and Bute Council already adopts a lot of the current good practice it also provided ideas on some opportunities for improvement including: further promotion of alternative ways of working, consideration of becoming a “See Me Partner in Work” demonstrating the Council’s commitment to mental health wellbeing within the workplace and networking with other local authorities sharing good practice.

The CIPD Employee Outlook: Focus on mental health in the Workplace (July 2016) paper highlights that almost one in three (up from a quarter in 2011) have experienced problems with mental health at work. They recommend the following interventions: phased returns to

work, flexible working, access to Occupational Health, Mental Health First Aiders, Stress Champions and Line Management training. These are all interventions that have been implemented within Argyll and Bute Council, which reinforces the fact that the council is already following best practice. Line managers are key to managing mental health within the workplace and for that reason they have all undergone mandatory stress training for managers. Managers also have access to PAM Assist Counselling services for workplace advice on dealing with sensitive workplace situations.

4.13 Return to work interviews completed by Department July - September 2016

A return to work interview is an informal meeting held between an employee and line manager following a period of sickness absence which allows the manager to welcome the employee back to work in a private setting, discuss the reason for their period of absence, acknowledge any issues in relation to the employee's attendance record over the past 12 months and let the employee catch up with any changes or updates that have taken place at work during their period of absence.

In accordance with the Council's Maximising Attendance procedures a return to work interview must be carried out by the line manager after every instance of sickness absence. Services therefore have a 100 % target when it comes to completion of return to work interviews. In order that a return to work interview is meaningful it should ideally be carried out on the day the employee returns to work or as soon as possible thereafter and certainly within three days of the employees return to work.

Table seven below outlines each department's performance with respect to percentage of return to work interviews carried out, in the first quarter of the year, and the average length of time for them to be completed in days (including non-work days) following the employees return to work.

The Council average for % of Return to Work Interviews completed was 81% for this quarter this year but this is a slight reduction in comparison to the same quarter last year where the average was 84%. Only one department has managed to meet the target of completing their return to work interviews within three days. It is likely this is due to the summer holiday period where managers may not always be available on the first day back to conduct these. The most notable change is the 13% reduction in Return to Work Interviews carried out by Health and Social Care Partnership. This has been highlighted to management in this service and will be the focus of attention over the next quarter.

4.14 **Table Seven: % return to work interviews completed by Service July - September 2016**

Department	% Completed FQ2 2016/17	Average Time to Complete (calendar days)	% Return to Work Interviews Completed FQ2 2015/16
Chief Executive Unit	100%	1.7	100%
Community Services	84%	5	83%
Customer Services	90%	3.8	95%
Development & Infrastructure	85%	3.4	85%
Health & Social Care Partnership	66%	4.3	79%
Council Total	81%	4.2	84%

5 CONCLUSION

5.1 In conclusion this report has detailed the Councils performance against targets and performance indicators for the period July - September 2016.

6 IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Policy This complies with the Council's Maximising Attendance Policy
- 6.2 Financial Failure to achieve targets in relation to maximising attendance is likely to have financial implications with respect to the cost of sick pay
- 6.3 HR Failure to maximise attendance is likely to have an impact on workforce productivity
- 6.4 Legal None
- 6.5 Equal Opportunities This complies with the Council's Equalities policy
- 6.6 Risk High levels of absence present risk to organisational efficiencies
- 6.7 Customer Service High levels of absence will impact on customer service

**Executive Director – Customer Services
Policy Lead – Dick Walsh**

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