

MAXIMISING ATTENDANCE: COUNCIL PERFORMANCE 2014/15

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 For the period April 2014 – March 2015 there has been a slight increase in the Council actual average days lost per FTE employee from 10.4 in 2013/14 to 10.6 in 2014/15. In respect of the split between Teachers and LGE staff groups there has been a significant increase from 6.7 to 8.2 for teachers and a slight decrease from 11.6 to 11.2 for LGE staff.
- 1.2 In comparison with other Scottish Local Authorities, the Council was ranked 27th overall in 2013/14. The best performing LA is Clackmannanshire with a rate of 7.4 and the poorest performing is West Dunbartonshire with a rate of 11.4.
- 1.3 Out of the thirteen services (Education is split into Non-Teaching and Teaching for the purposes of reporting) six met their target. This is an improvement upon last year where only two service areas managed to meet their targets.
- 1.4 The main reasons for sickness absence across the Council during 2014/15 were Stress, depression and mental health (23.5%), Medical treatment/ operations (16.5%) and Stomach, Liver, Kidneys and Digestion (11.0%).
- 1.5 Stress remains the main cause of sickness absence and initiatives have been put in place to address this. The Council conducted a Stress Audit in 2014. Following this analysis of the results took place and a Stress Audit Action plan was developed for each Service. A new Stress at Work Policy has also been developed and is currently being progressed by the HR Team. Mandatory Stress Awareness Training has been rolled out across the Council for all managers and staff with 282 employees now trained. An additional management report has also been added to the suite of monthly management reports sent to Heads of Service and Directors on a monthly basis, which highlights every instance of absence due to stress to provide a further reminder to line managers to have an attendance review meeting. It also gives senior managers an overall picture of the volume of absences due to stress per month.
- 1.6 Customer Services and Community Services have increased the percentage of return to work interviews completed this financial year. However, Development & Infrastructure and Chief Executives have experienced a slight decrease.
- 1.7 The report also details progress made with the corporate actions to maximise attendance and identifies future actions.

1.8 It is recommended that the PRS Committee note the content of this report.

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2. INTRODUCTION

2.1. The purpose of this report is to update the Performance Review and Scrutiny (PRS) Committee on the Council's performance on Maximising Attendance during the period April 2014- March 2015.

3. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the PRS Committee:

- 3.1. Note the content of this report
- 3.2. Note the ongoing actions being taken to tackle and reduce absence.

4. DETAIL

4.1. Table One below shows the Council's Performance indicator figures over the last three years showing there has been a significant increase from 6.7 to 8.2 for Teachers and a slight decrease from 11.6 to 11.2 for LGE staff.

TABLE ONE: TRENDS IN SPI FIGURES (Average Work days lost per FTE employee)

Staff Group	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Teachers	8.2	6.7	8.2
LGE	10.9	11.6	11.2

4.2. Table Two below outlines the performance of each service against the targets set during the first quarter of the year. Out of the thirteen services (Education is split into Non-Teaching and Teaching for the purposes of reporting) six met their target. This is an improvement upon last year where only two service areas managed to meet their targets.

TABLE TWO: PERFORMANCE 2014/15

	Actual Average days lost per FTE employee 2014/15		Target Days lost per FTE Employee 2014/2015	Actual Average days lost per FTE employee 2013/14
Adult Care	17.5	↑	14.9	15.5
Children and Families	15.1	↑	14.0	14.5
Community and Culture	7.2	↓	8.0	8.2

Education (non-teaching)	9.4	↓	14.8	15.7
COMMUNITY SERVICES (NOT INCLUDING TEACHING)	12.5	↓	13.9	14.2
TEACHERS	8.7	↑	6.5	6.7
COMMUNITY SERVICES	10.7	↓	10.8	11.1
Customer and Support	5.9	↓	6.4	6.7
Governance and Law	5.5	↓	6.1	9.1
Facility Services	13.2	↑	9.2	9.5
Directorate& Improvement and HR	6.1	↑	6.0	4.0
CUSTOMER SERVICES	8.9	↑	7.5	8.4
Economic Development	8.8	↑	7.5	7.9
Planning and Regulatory	5.8	↓	6.0	6.4
Roads and Amenity Services (including Performance and Business Improvement)	19.7	↑	12.0	12.2
DEVELOPMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE	11.7	↑	10.4	10.6
Strategic Finance	6.2	↓	9.4	9.7
COUNCIL TOTAL	10.6	↑	10.2	10.4

4.3. Those seven Services who failed to meet their targets all saw an increase in their actual average days lost per FTE employee from the previous financial year and those that made their target all saw a decrease.

4.4. Overall, there has been a slight increase in the Council actual average days lost per FTE employee increasing from 10.4 in 2013/14 to 10.6 in 2014/15. However, as outlined above when you consider the split between Teachers and LGE staff groups there has been a significant increase from 6.7 to 8.2 for teachers and a slight decrease from 11.6 to 11.2 for LGE staff.

4.5. Quarter 4 in 2014/15 saw particularly high absence with 10,108 work days lost out of a total of 35,445 for the financial year. The number one reason for absence in this quarter was Stress with 2,108 days accounting for this but the second reason was Infections with 1,750 work days lost. Infections does not feature in the top reasons for absence in the yearly analysis, as can be seen below, but is the second biggest reason for absence in quarter 4. The number of days absence due to infections increased by 115% between quarter 3 and 4. Had it stayed at an average number of days we might have expected a council average to come down to 10.4 days. On 8 January 2015 the BBC reported that Flu was circulating at its highest level for three years and Argyll and Bute Council's absence figures for this year have been affected by this. The Committee should note that the Healthy Working Lives Group promoted infection control measures during this period.

4.6. Long term absence accounted for 72.5% of all absence in 2013/14 but this has decreased quite dramatically to 53.7% in 2014/15. This is a significant improvement. The Maximising Attendance policy is focused on early intervention when dealing with long term absence. Managers are required to have the first Attendance Review meetings during the first 4-8 weeks of sickness absence. However, this means that the proportion of absence due to short term has increased to 46.3%. The Maximising Attendance policy focuses on a series of meetings and cautions to improve attendance for short term frequent absences.

4.7. Proportion of Absence

4.7.1. It is expected that the percentage of work days lost should be proportionate to the size of the service, i.e. larger services will be responsible for a larger proportion of the Council's total work days lost. Services where the % Absence is higher than the %FTE represent higher than expected levels of absence. The services where absence is higher than expected will be targeted for specific improvement based on detailed analysis of management information.

4.7.2. Table three below shows the percentage FTE for each service against the percentage of the Council's total work days lost that it accounts for. Those services in red indicate higher than expected absence levels.

4.7.3. In 2013/14 there were four services whose absence was higher than their % FTE and this year that figure remains the same with the exception that Education (non-teaching) have reduced their absence to below their %FTE and Facility Services have increased but Adult Care, Children and Families and Roads and Amenity Services (including PBI) remain above.

Table Three: % Absence and FTE by Service

Service	%Absence	%FTE
Adult Care	18.8	10.5
Children and Families	9.4	6.6
Community and Culture	4.0	5.9
Education (non-teaching)	11.3	12.7
Teachers	19.0	24.5
Customer and Support	3.3	6.1
Governance and Law	0.8	1.4
Facility Services	9.1	7.1
Economic Development	2.0	3.1
Improvement and HR	1.8	3.2
Planning and Regulatory Services	1.8	3.2
Roads and Amenity Services (including PBI)	18.4	14.4
Strategic Finance	1.4	2.6

4.8. Reasons for Absence

- 4.8.1. The main reasons for sickness absence across the Council during 2014/15 were Stress, depression and mental health (23.5%), Medical treatment/ operations (16.5%) and Stomach, Liver, Kidneys and Digestion (11.0%). In comparison with last year the rank order has slightly changed – Stress, depression and mental health was also the number one reason last year but the percentage has increased from 19.9% to 23.5% but Medical Treatment/Operations has now overtaken Stomach, Liver, Kidneys and Digestion which was last year’s number two reason for absence.
- 4.8.2. Stress remains the main cause of sickness absence and initiatives have been put in place to address this. The Council conducted a Stress Audit in 2014. Following this analysis of the results took place and a Stress Audit Action plan was developed for each Service. A new Stress at Work Policy has also been developed and is currently being progressed by the HR Team. Mandatory Stress Awareness Training has been rolled out across the Council for all managers and staff with 282 employees now trained. An additional management report has also been added to the suite of monthly management reports sent to Heads of Service and Directors on a monthly basis, which highlights every instance of absence due to stress to provide a further reminder to line managers to have an attendance review meeting. It also gives senior managers an overall picture of the volume of absences due to stress per month. Long Term absences account for 69.5% of stress related absences.
- 4.8.3. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) most recent Annual Absence Management Survey Report (2014) reported that “Two-fifths of respondents report that stress related absence has increased over the past year...Public Sector and larger organisations were most likely to report that stress-related absence has increased.” 77% of public service organisations reported stress as their number one cause of long term absence in manual workers and 82% as their number one reason for non-manual workers. Given this information it is unlikely that we are alone in experiencing a) an increase in absences due to stress related reasons and b) it being the number one reason for absence.
- 4.8.4. Table 4 highlights the percentage of absence due to stress related reasons per service. There are eight services which are above the council average for Stress related absences of 23.5%.

Table Four: % of Absence due to Stress per Service

Service	% of Absence due to Stress
Customer & Support Services	34.8
Facility Services	16.2
Governance & Law	10.9
Improvement & HR	35.5
Economic Development	36.7
Planning & Regulatory	22.0
Roads & Amenity Services (including PBI)	20.9
Education	27.2
Children & Families	26.9
Community & Culture	21.0
Adult Care	24.0

Strategic Finance	38.0
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4.8.5. Medical Treatment has overtaken Stomach, liver, kidneys and digestive problems as the second biggest cause of sickness absence. Unsurprisingly, the majority of these absences are long term with 74.8% of absences being over 28 days as these absences are usually due to things like planned surgical operations and recovery, chemotherapy treatment etc.

4.8.6. Stomach, Liver, Kidney & digestive problems have moved into the number three reason for absence and unsurprisingly the majority of these absences are short term with 74.2% being under 28 days long.

4.9. Cost of Sickness Absence

4.9.1. Table five below outlines the actual cost of sick pay paid by each service of the Council and a comparison with last year's costings. There has been a £113,711 increase in the cost of sickness absence in this financial year.

Table Five: Sick pay by Service £

Service	2013/2014	2014/2015
Adult Care	639 886	669 382
Children and Families	275 912	301 327
Community and Culture	126 313	117 126
Education	1 112 359	1 164 595
Community Services Total	2 154 470	2 252 430
Facility Services	176 253	206 182
Governance and Law	28 050	16 904
Customer and Support	109 409	87 347
Improvement and HR (including Directorate)	41 299	47 106
Customer Services Total	355 011	357 539
Economic Development	69 904	53 002
Planning and Regulatory	80 391	48 692
Roads and Amenity Services & PBI	413 064	472 483
Development and Infrastructure Total	563 359	574 177
Strategic Finance	34 516	26 921
Grand Total	3 107 356	3 221 067

4.10 Return to Work interviews

4.10.1 The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) view return to work interviews as the single most effective tool in managing absence. When carried out in accordance with the Council's procedures the return to work interview allows managers and employees to review the cause of each absence, check that the employee is fit to return to work and put in place any measures required to support the employee back to work. Particularly where the employee has been off on long term sickness absence the

return to work interview is a good opportunity to catch up on changes that they may have missed and reintegrate them back into the workplace. Most importantly the return to work interview indicates to the employee that their attendance at work is valued and that they were missed during their absence.

4.10.2 In order to be most effective return to work interviews should ideally take place on the day the employee returns to work or at least within three working days of their return. Services have a 100% target for completion of return to work interviews. Table Five below outlines the performance by department. The final column shows last year's performance for comparison. Overall, Customer Services and Community Services have increased the percentage of return to work interviews completed. However, Development & Infrastructure and Chief Executives have experienced a slight decrease.

Table Six: % Return to work interviews completed by department April 2014-March 2015

Dept.	Return to work interviews expected	Completed RTWI's	% Complete 2014/15	Average time to complete (calendar days)	% Complete 2013/14
Chief Executives Unit	44	41	93%	3.9	96%
Community Services	3523	2580	79%	4.6	69%
Customer Services	844	780	92%	3.3	81%
Development & Infrastructure	691	566	81%	3.6	83%

4.11 Performance 2014/15

Throughout the year the following measures have continued to support services in achieving their maximising attendance targets:

- Online guidance 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 for 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 was appointed to support Community Services with their absence. This post commenced during November 2013 and provides case management advice and training to managers in Community Services.

The following new measures have been put in place:

- The Council's healthy working lives group has been formed and is responsible for driving forward the Council's wellbeing agenda which will include preventative initiatives for improving overall wellbeing and reducing sickness absence. The council has achieved a HWL Bronze Award as a result of this group's activities.
- A new e-learning module for the Maximising Attendance procedures has been developed and launched on the new ELearning platform LEON.
- A group has been set up with representatives from each department and the Trades Unions to review the Maximising Attendance procedures with a view to clarifying areas of ambiguity and further improving guidance and tools for managers and staff and this will be available shortly on the Hub.
- The Council conducted a Stress Audit which was concluded in 2014. Following this analysis of the results took place and a Stress Audit Action plan was developed for each Service.
- A new Stress at Work Policy has also been developed and some further suggestions have been made for additional guidance with some amendments to be made as a result before it goes through the Committee approval process.
- Mandatory Stress Awareness Training has been rolled out across the Council for all managers and staff.
- An additional management report has also been added to the suite of management reports sent to Heads of Service and Directors which highlights every instance of absence due to Stress to provide a further reminder to line manager to have an attendance review meeting and it also gives senior managers an overall picture of the volume of absences due to Stress per month.
- Clear communications are being put in place for the Service Choices revenue budget reduction process, which will impact on employees. This will not prevent stress related absence, but will contribute to mitigating it.
- SMT will be holding a session dedicated to managing attendance in June.

4.12 Targets 2014/15

- 4.12.1 Targets for maximising attendance during 2015/16 will be agreed by the Council's Strategic Management Team and reported to the Committee at their next meeting.

4.13 Achieving 2015/16 Targets

- 4.13.1 After analysis of the figures and reasons for absence the following corporate actions have been agreed to continue to support services in achieving their targets:

- The Councils Healthy Working Lives group coordinate an infection control initiative to raise general awareness amongst staff of measures that can reduce the spread of infections. This will include hand washing posters and information on the Hub and in Cascade.

- The Healthy Working Lives group will continue to meet and promote different areas of health awareness, including mental health.
- The Improvement and Organisational Development Team will continue to roll out Argyll and Bute Manager training to managers, with over 240 currently enrolled and actively participating in the programme. This is developing their management skills, improving their knowledge of HR policies and procedures and reinforcing their important role within the organisation. These managers are crucial to maintaining good employee relations and productivity and in turn reducing absence.
- The Improvement and Organisational Development Team have accelerated and will continue to run Stress Awareness Training for staff and managers, with excellent feedback.
- The Stress Risk Action Plans, developed as a result of the stress audit, will continue to be implemented by each Service.
- Further analysis of the free text from the Stress audit and employee survey is now available and further work will be carried out to identify and implement any further recommendations or action that will assist in the reduction of Stress.
- The spend to save model put in place for Community Services with the employment of an HR Assistant to assist with the management of absence has been material in contributing to an overall reduction in the departmental absence. SMT may consider targeted spend to save in other areas of high absence using a similar approach.
- Given that this year the Council is entering into its Service Choices programme it is likely this will increase uncertainty and anxiety for individuals regarding their future employment and also have an adverse knock on effect on absence. The Leadership Team, Managers and the Communications team will play an important part in ensuring appropriate communication during this time of significant change. This will assist in reducing feelings of uncertainty and increase involvement and engagement at this difficult time.

4.13.2 In addition to these specific corporate measures HR have been working during the course of this year to improve resources for managers and the following are due to be implemented during the course of 2015/16:

- A new stress at work policy is in draft format and will be agreed and implemented during the course of 2015/16. This draft policy proposes to introduce a risk assessment framework with clear guidelines for managing stress at work
- Carry out some further benchmarking with other similar local authorities to explore their absence management strategies.
- Previously HR carried out roadshows regards Maximising Attendance procedures but given the additional workload for HR as a result of Service Choices, it is unlikely this can be resourced. However, should it be identified as a priority these could be run on an ad hoc basis.
- Further analysis of the Stress absence statistics to a section level to try to identify any trends and explore any further targeted assistance that could be provided to Departments/service areas to reduce their absence due to Stress.

- Make use of our Occupational Health provider to deliver some targeted presentations regarding the use of their services to assist the management of absence including proactive steps sections can take to reduce their higher reasons for absence.
- New reports had been developed and hoped to be implemented during the course of 2014/15. Similar to the reports currently produced on return to work interviews completed these new reports will highlight where attendance review meetings have taken place following an employee meeting a trigger within the policy. Support can then be targeted to managers who do not appear to be conducting these meetings. However, due to the high levels of complexity dealing with the data and given that we are still having to work with hard copy information, which can be incomplete when received, and is time consuming to process this has not been possible. As the Resource Link 4 project develops and further improvements are scoped for online process we will look to include this in the scope of the Resource Link 5 project.

5 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 In conclusion this report has outlined the Council's performance on Attendance Management for the period 2014-15. Overall, there has been a slight increase in the total number of days lost in comparison to last year. Teacher's absence has increased significantly while LGE Employee absence has slightly decreased.
- 5.2 In order to for the Council to achieve its target to move out of the bottom quartile of Scottish Local Authorities, targets have been set and corporate measures have been agreed by the SMT for the year ahead. Continued action from managers in the form of monitoring and review of sickness absence with early intervention in the form of return to work interviews, attendance review meetings and OHP referrals will be required to ensure that absences are managed appropriately and in accordance with the Council's procedures. It is important as well that managers recognise the importance of communication and engagement with employees, particularly at a time of change, in order to reduce levels of stress.

6 IMPLICATIONS

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

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