

MAXIMISING ATTENDANCE: COUNCIL PERFORMANCE OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2016

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report describes the Council's absence performance during the quarter October – December 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:

- Data for 2015/16 from the local government benchmarking framework shows a much improved performance for teacher absence – ranking 25th which is an improvement of 3 places.
- Data for 2015/16 from the local government benchmarking framework shows a steady performance against other local authorities for local government employee absence – ranking 21st which is the same as the previous year
- The performance for quarter October – December 2016 was 2.63 work days lost per FTE employee below the target of 2.37. It was also poorer than the same quarter last year which was 2.45.
- 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 October – December 2016 the Council recorded a performance slightly poorer than the target set with the total work days lost per FTE employee at 2.63 against a target of 2.37. This replicates the pattern traditionally followed where absence increases in quarter 3 of the year. Against the same quarter last year the Council reports a poorer performance in terms of total work days lost per FTE employee - 2.63 against 2.45 last year.

1.3 The local government benchmarking draft information available from the Improvement Service reports that the average days lost per FTE for local government employees across Scotland was 10.63 in 2015/16. This was a 1.6% decrease on the previous year. In the same period Argyll and Bute Council decreased their absence by 2.3% to 11.05 work days lost per FTE employee. The council's ranking has remained the same – 21st.

1.4 For Teachers the Improvement Service reports that the average days lost per FTE in Scotland was 6.12 in 2015/16. This was a 2.6% decrease on the previous year. In the same period Argyll and Bute Council decreased their absence by 15.12% to 6.85. The Council's ranking has improved by 3 places to 25th.

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.
- 1.7 The cost of sick pay in the period October - December 2016 was £825,771. This is a significant reduction in cost in comparison with the same quarter last year which was £938,929.
- 1.8 The top three reasons for absence in the period September - December 2016 were Stress/Depression/Mental Health/Fatigue (27%), Medical Treatment (13%) and Stomach, Liver, Kidney & Digestion (12%).
- 1.9 The percentage of return to work interviews completed in the reporting period was 76%.
- 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

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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 against targets and performance indicators for Maximising Attendance during the period October – December 2016.

3 RECOMMENDATION

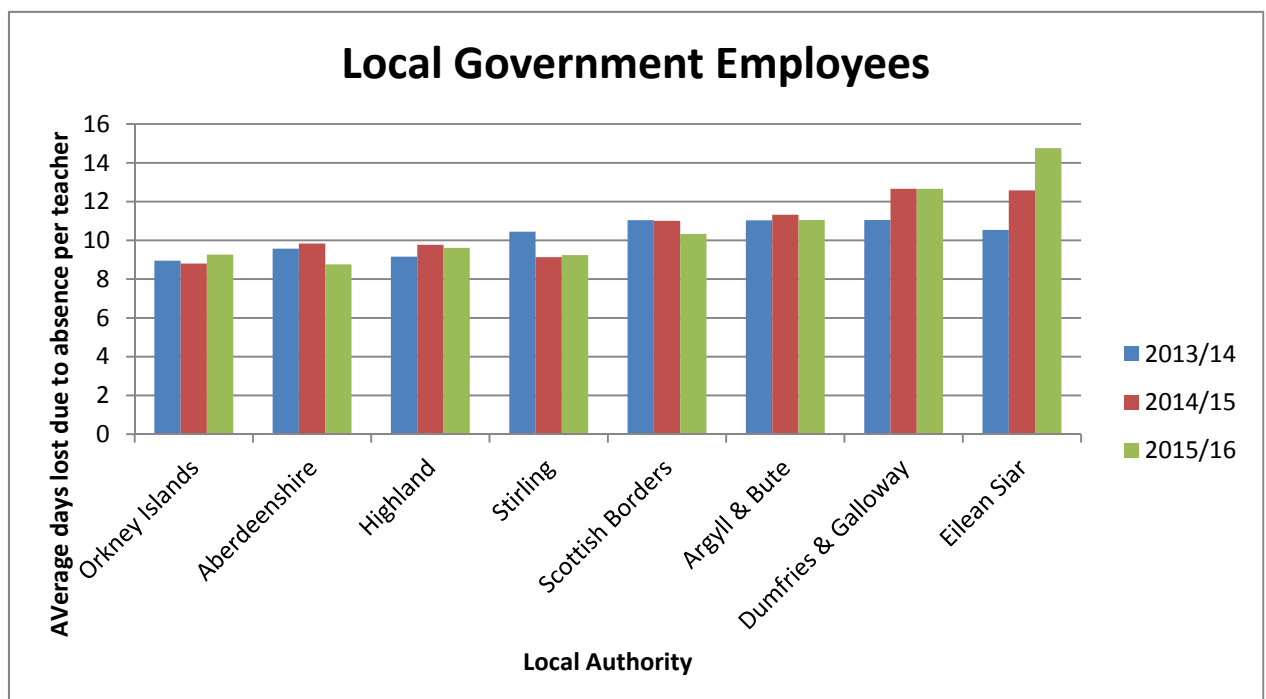
- 3.1 It is recommended that the PRS Committee
- (iii) Note the content of this report.
 - (iv) Note that the measures the council has put in place to manage attendance

4 DETAIL

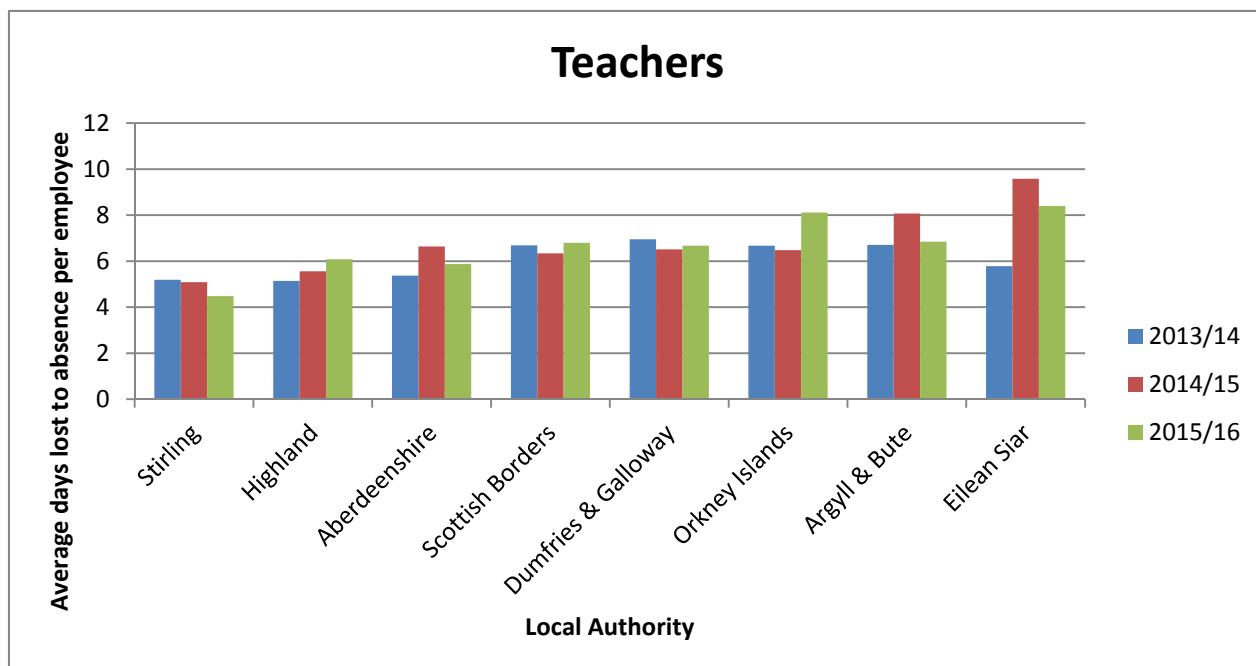
4.1 National Picture

4.1.1 COSLA commissioned a Workforce and Wellbeing Attendance Survey in May 2016 and although a final report is not yet complete they provided an overview of the results to the Heads of Personnel Meeting in November 2016. Their aims were to look at the current Wellbeing and Attendance Management policies/interventions and the overall investment in this area against the trends in performance and costs to identify what works.

They provided slides with graphs showing each local authority’s performance for the last three years for both teaching and non-teaching employees. Below is an extract of the graph for our LGBF family group for local government employees (non-teaching).



The local government benchmarking draft information available from the Improvement Service reports that the average days lost per FTE for local government employees across Scotland was 10.63 in 2015/16. This was a 1.6% decrease on the previous year. In the same period Argyll and Bute Council decreased their absence by 2.3% to 11.05 work days lost per FTE employee. The council's ranking has remained the same – 21st.



For Teachers the Improvement Service reports that the average days lost per FTE in Scotland was 6.12 in 2015/16. This was a 2.6% decrease on the previous year. In the same period Argyll and Bute Council decreased their absence by 15.12% to 6.85. That equates to a reduction of 1,119 FTE work days across Teachers absence in 2015/16. The Council's ranking has improved by 3 places to 25th. This is an impressive decrease in one year that may have been assisted by the HR Assistant resource providing specialist absence advice to the Education service to support managers with attendance. This has included supporting managers at Attendance Review Meetings; attending the Head Teachers Meetings to give an overview of the Maximising Attendance Procedures and the importance of interventions including Return to work Interviews and the use of Occupational Health as well giving updates on absence performance and being available to discuss complicated cases and appropriate actions.

COSLA have also begun to look at the interventions used by all local authorities against their performance within the LGBF. From initial analysis Argyll and Bute Council use a very similar range of interventions to the rest of the local authorities surveyed including electronic and face to face training, management accountability for absence, Mental Health First Aiders and tight absence triggers as well as supportive services such as Employee Assistance Programmes, Occupational Health, participation in Healthy Working Lives and Discounted Leisure.

4.1.2 The CIPD Annual Survey Report on Absence Management (Public Sector Summary) (2016) outlines that despite the reduction in absence levels the median cost of absence in the public sector has increased from £789 per employee to £835 per employee per year. For the same period Argyll and Bute Council reported a cost of £843 per employee showing a similar figure to the public sector organisations surveyed.

The report also highlights that half of public sector organisations report an increase in stress related absence and two thirds in mental health problems. Argyll and Bute Council shares this trend along with the public sector organisations that were surveyed.

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.
- Access to the Managers' My View Dashboard which provides the following in real time:
 - 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

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 the following new measures to support services to achieve their maximising attendance targets:

- Training for a further five Mental Health First Aid Trainers to take place in February 2017. 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.
- Argyll and Bute Council now has a member of the HR & IOD team on the SPDS Health & Wellbeing Group important for networking, feedback and sharing best practice nationally.
- A new Employee Assistance Programme has been procured and began on 6 January 2017. Health Assured provide a service designed to help employees deal with any personal or professional problems which could be impacting on your general health and well-being. Health Assured are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year offering the following services:
 - Life Support - Unlimited access to counselling for emotional problems and a pathway to structured telephone counselling or face-to-face counselling sessions at your convenience.
 - Legal information - For any issues that cause anxiety or distress including debt management, accountancy, lawsuits, consumer disputes, property or neighbour legalities.
 - Bereavement Assistance - Health Assured offers qualified and experienced counsellors who can help with grief and related stress plus a team of legal advisors to help with legal issues.
 - Medical information - Qualified nurses are on hand to offer advice on a range of medical or health related issues. They can't diagnose but can offer a sympathetic ear and practical information and advice.
 - Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Online - a range of CBT self-help modules, informative factsheets and invaluable advice videos from leading qualified counsellors.
 - Critical Incident Stress Management – a fully trained trauma counsellor or counselling team will be onsite, typically within 24 to 48 working hours to deliver a specialist group counselling debriefing. This service has already been utilised. It was well received providing an important service for employees at a distressing time with the option of follow up services.
 - Wellbeing Portal: - Wellbeing resources at your fingertips designed to quickly inform and assist with a number of common corners ranging from stress to diet.
 - Helpful fitness and wellbeing advice,
 - Four week self-help programmes
 - Mini health checks
- The contract with Argyll and Bute Council's current Occupational Health Provider – PAM was renewed in January 2017. They will continue to provide good quality advice and guidance for managers managing absence and to ensure that employees are supported during periods of ill health. A review meeting has been arranged to look at proposals to make more use of video consultations which would be more convenient for the employee; use of nurse led consultations and

analysis of where the Council could better support employees with health conditions and prevent future absence.

4.2.4 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:

- Reviewing the Maximising Attendance procedures.

4.2.5 Absence Performance October - December 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.

4.2.6 Table One: Performance October - December 2016

Service	Target WDL per FTE Employee 16/17	WDL per FTE Employee in Q3 16/17	WDL per FTE Employee in Q3 15/16	WDL per FTE employee in Q3 14/15	% Change from Q3 15/16
Adult Care	4.10	4.52	3.86	4.49	0.17
Children & Families	3.15	3.06	3.35	3.52	-0.08
TOTAL HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE PARTNERSHIP	3.78	4.06	3.69	4.13	0.10
Community & Culture	1.50	1.92	1.11	1.01	0.73
Education (Non Teaching)	2.15	2.68	2.13	2.33	0.26
Teachers	1.63	1.48	1.86	2.49	-0.20
TOTAL COM SERV (INCLUDING TEACHING)	1.80	1.96	3.44	2.25	-0.43
Customer and Support	1.50	1.60	0.65	1.31	1.46
Governance and Law	1.50	1.41	1.42	1.65	0.00
Facility Services	2.28	2.60	2.75	2.69	-0.06
Improvement and HR	1.50	1.94	1.33	1.61	0.46
TOTAL CUSTOMER SERVICES	1.93	2.12	1.81	2.45	0.17
Economic Development	1.50	2.03	2.07	1.88	-0.02
Planning and Regulatory Services	1.90	1.64	3.35	1.50	-0.51
Performance & Business Improvement	1.50	2.17	5.09	3.84	-0.57
Roads and Amenity Services	3.60	4.16	3.61	3.99	0.15
TOTAL DEV & INFRASTRUCTURE	3.03	3.44	3.51	3.08	-0.02

TOTAL CHIEF EXEC UNIT	1.50	2.54	1.58	0.70	0.60
COUNCIL TOTAL	2.37	2.63	2.45	2.75	0.08

Against the quarterly target set, the Council missed meeting it this quarter recording a performance of 2.63 work days lost per FTE against a target of 2.37. Against the same quarter last year the Council reports an increase in absence reporting 2.63 work days lost against 2.45 the previous year.

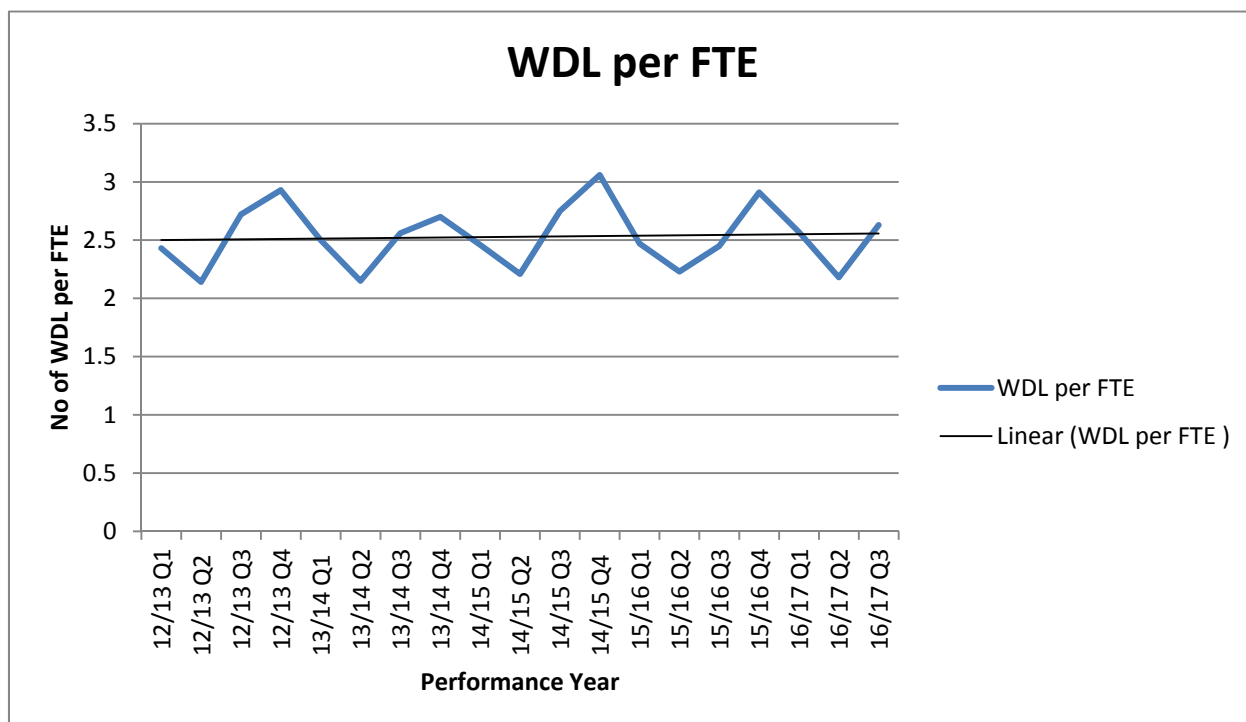
Four services out of fourteen (shaded in the above table) have met or improved on their target this quarter and six have improved upon their performance against the same quarter last year (these have a negative figure in the % change column).

In each performance year quarter 3 usually sees an increase in absence from quarter 2 levels so those services who have not reported this have done well to keep their levels down especially Teachers which is a service with a large number of employees but continues to show a steady downwards trend.

Children & Families has traditionally been an area of high absence but it has also shown a very steady downwards trend against a backdrop of significant change with the creation of the Health and Social Care Partnership.

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

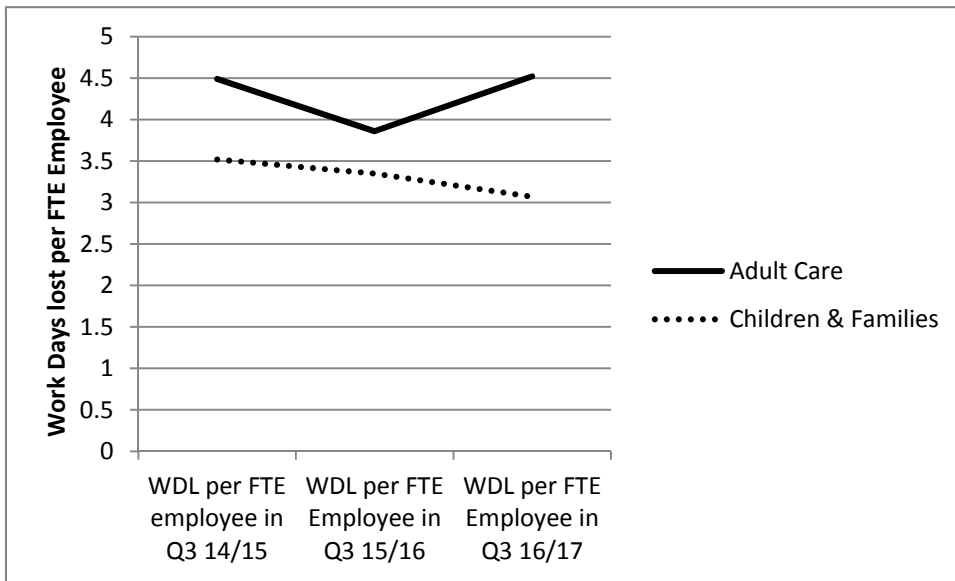
Graph One: Overall Council Performance in each quarter over the last 4 years



Performance in previous years shows a similar trend in WDL per FTE with an increase in Q3 of around 0.4 WDL per FTE from Q2 figures. Performance in quarter three in 2016/17 also replicates this. In quarters 3 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.

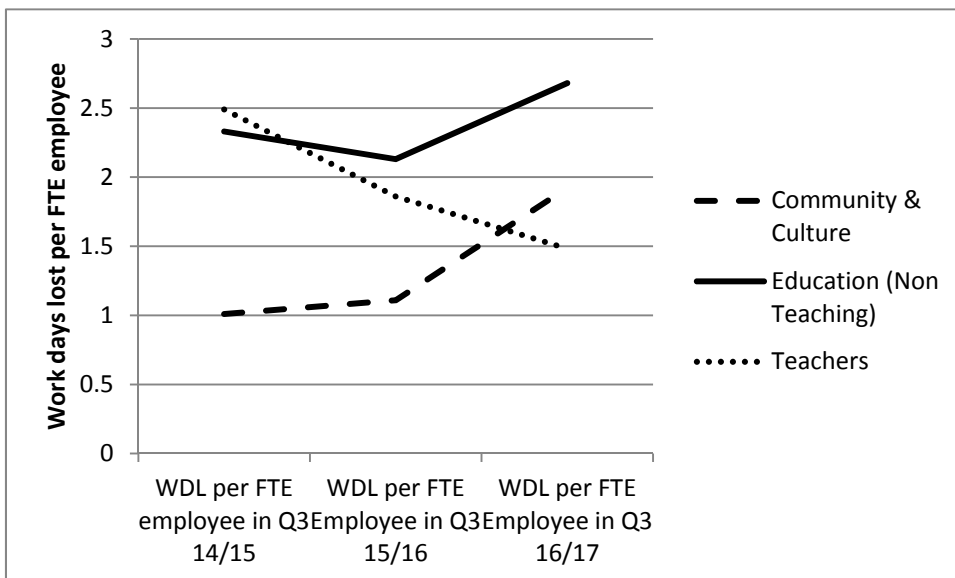
Graphs Two to Five below outline the performance of each service in quarter two over the last 3 years.

Graph Two: Health and Social Care Partnership Absence Trend



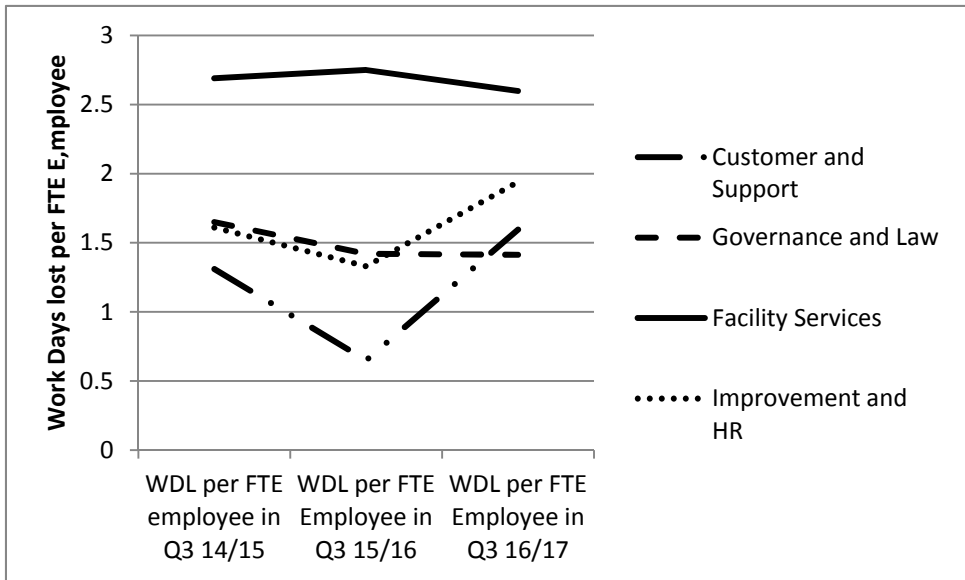
Children & Families are showing a consistent downwards trend. Adult Care's absence trend has decreased in 2015/16 and then increased to the same level as 2014/15 in 2016/17. Up until the creation of the Health and Social Care Partnership, in April 2016, these services had a dedicated HR Assistant supporting managers with attendance. Despite this no longer being the case Children & Families have continued to improve their attendance levels.

4.4 Graph Three: Community Services Absence Trend



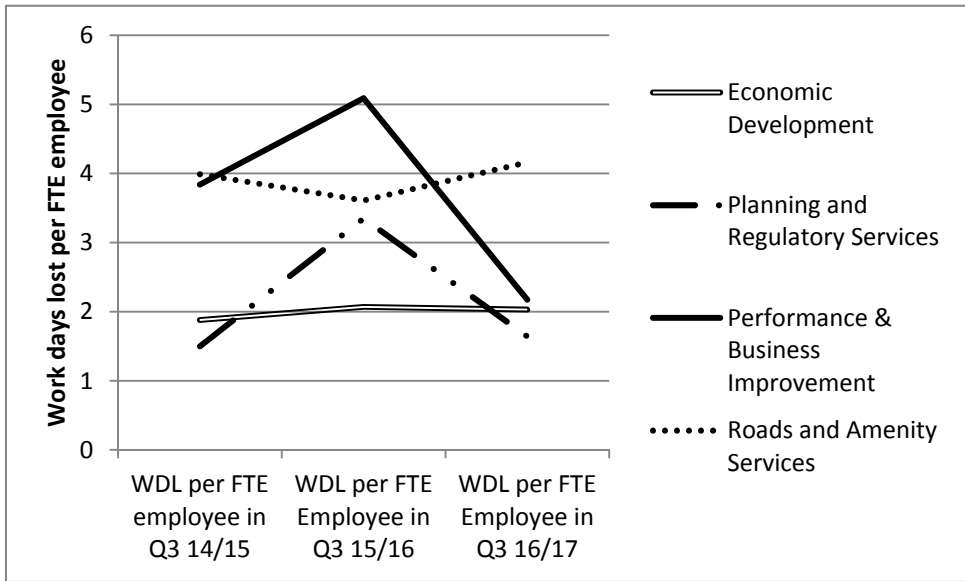
Teachers' absence is showing a steady downwards trend. Education (Non –Teaching) dipped slightly in 2015/16 but has risen beyond 2014/15 levels in 2016/17. Community & Culture has shown a sharp increase in 2016/17 but is a smaller service which has seen very low levels of absence in recent performance years.

4.5 Graph Four: Customer Services Absence Trend



Improvement & HR have shown a sharp increase in 2016/17 as have Customer & Support. Governance & Law have shown a consistent decrease. Facility Support Service has shown a small decrease.

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



Roads & Amenity Services show a slight decrease then slight increase between 2015/16 and 2016/17 data. Performance & Business Improvement has shown a sharp decrease in 2016/17. Planning & Regulatory Services has shown a sharp increase then decrease between 2015/16 and 2016/17. Economic Development's absence has remained fairly static.

4.7 **Cost of Absence**

The table below outlines the cost of sick pay paid by each service of the Council during October – December 2016. The total cost for sick pay is £825,771 which is a significant decrease on the same quarter last year where the cost was £938,929. This table highlights services with the highest overall cost and cost per FTE indicates comparative

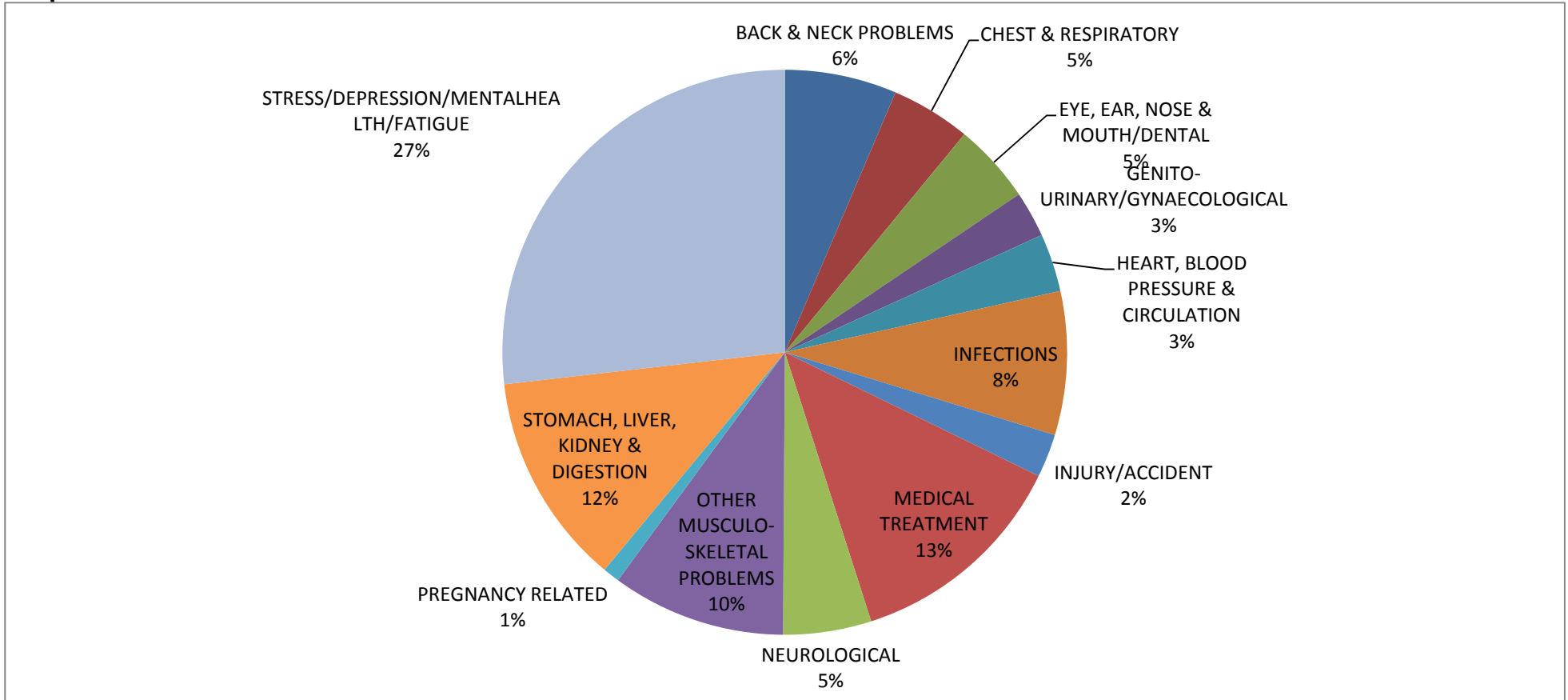
cost between services. Those with the highest cost per FTE are Adult Care, Children & Families and Roads and Amenity Services.

Table Two: Sick pay by Service October - December 2016
Service

Service	16/17 Q3 Cost	16/17 Q3 Cost per FTE £
Adult Care	151,540	332
Children & Families	61,059	292
TOTAL HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE PARTNERSHIP	212,599	319
Community & Culture	30,117	153
Education (Non Teaching)	98,998	161
Teachers	187,027	208
TOTAL COM SERV (INCLUDING TEACHING)	316,142	185
Customer and Support	38,292	179
Governance and Law	6,137	131
Facility Services	42,438	128
Improvement and HR	18,812	245
TOTAL CUSTOMER SERVICES	105,679	158
Economic Development	15,730	217
Planning and Regulatory Services	19,056	184
Performance & Business Improvement	4,735	142
Roads and Amenity Services	133,484	288
TOTAL DEV & INFRASTRUCTURE	173,005	257
TOTAL CHIEF EXEC UNIT	18,346	242
COUNCIL TOTAL	825,771	218

4.8 **Absence Reasons**

Graph Six: Reasons for Absence Q3 2016/17



4.9 Graph 6 shows the breakdown of the reasons for absence in the quarter October - December 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 Q3 2015/16 against Q3 2016/17

Reason	Q3 2015/16 Council Total %	Q3 2016/17 Council Total %
STRESS/DEPRESSION/MENTALHEALTH/FATIGUE	23	27
MEDICAL TREATMENT	17	13
STOMACH, LIVER, KIDNEY & DIGESTION	11	12
OTHER MUSCULO-SKELETAL PROBLEMS	8	10

The top 3 reasons for sickness absence across the Council during Q3 of 2016/17 were Stress/Depression/Mental Health/Fatigue (27%), Medical Treatment (13%) and Stomach, Liver, Kidney & Digestion (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 27%, from 23%; a decrease in the number reporting absent due to Medical Treatment from 17% to 13% and an increase in Stomach, Liver, Kidney & Digestion 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 4.2.3 the Council has a new Employee Assistance Programme provided by Health Assured 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.

4.10 In addition, four individuals were trained as Mental Health First Aiders in September 2016 and a further 5 are due to be trained in February 2017. This area is also the focus of future proposals to support employees.

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 Health Assured Counselling services for workplace advice on dealing with sensitive workplace situations.

4.11 **Return to work interviews completed by Department October - December 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 76% for this quarter this year a reduction in comparison to the same quarter last year where the average was 86%. Only Customer Services have managed to improve upon their performance last year. The most notable change is the 17% 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.

4.12 **Table Seven: % return to work interviews completed by Service October - December 2016**

Department	% Completed FQ3 2016/17	Average Time to Complete (calendar days)	% Return to Work Interviews Completed FQ3 2015/16
Chief Executive Unit	90%	3	100%
Community Services	75%	4.2	87%
Customer Services	95%	4.9	91%
Development & Infrastructure	71%	4.9	81%
Health & Social Care Partnership	67%	8.6	84%
Council Total	76%	5.3	86%

5 CONCLUSION

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

6 IMPLICATIONS

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|-------------------------|---|
| 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

For further information contact: Jane Fowler, Head of Improvement and HR
Tel 01546 604466