

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

**CORPORATE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S
REPORT TO
FINANCE, ASSETS & PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

25 September 2023

Report Title: Sickness Absence Update Report

Submitted by: Service Director Strategy, People and Performance

Portfolios: Portfolio Holders – One Council, People and Performance

Ward(s) affected: All

<u>Purpose of the Report</u>	<u>Key Decision</u> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>To provide information and assurance around the management and understanding of sickness absence rates within the organisation as well as taking account of local and regional benchmarking data.</p> <p>To provide assurance as to progress against the sickness absence action plan.</p>	
<u>Recommendation</u>	
<p>1. That scrutiny acknowledge and debate content of the report</p>	
<u>Reasons</u>	
<p>The Council's Sickness Absence rate remains at a level higher than our target. There are local and national drivers for this and this report provides assurance that the Council recognises and embraces its duty of care to employees and that absence is being managed fairly and consistently.</p>	

1. Background

- 1.1 Sickness Absence and wellbeing remains a key focus of the People Strategy and for individual services. Since the pandemic we have seen a rise in sickness absence, as have many other organisations nationally as seen within the ONS data for 2022. ([source ONS](#))
- 1.2 The teams have undertaken significant proactive work with regard to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of staff and this has resulted in a significant decrease in absences relating to depression, anxiety and stress.

2. Issues

- 2.1 Sickness Absence remains higher than target. We acknowledge the importance of this and are both seeking to understand the causes and contributory factors to this (both internal and external) and then enacting a structured and measurable action plan to mitigate.
- 2.2 The appendix report included here outlines the fact that absence rates are exacerbated by external issues such as NHS waiting lists, particularly with regard to musculoskeletal conditions.

3. Recommendation

- 3.1 Scrutiny Committee reviews the appendix report.

4. Reasons

- 4.1 Absence is an important performance indicator for the organisation which can highlight areas for improvement, engagement and wellbeing. High absence rates also represent a financial cost. The Strategic Hub have supported in conducting a 'deep dive' into our absence rates, reasons and demographics to support delivery a focussed action plan.

5. Options Considered

n/a

6. Legal and Statutory Implications

- 6.1 none

7. Equality Impact Assessment

- 7.1 The attendance policy and related processes are equality impact assessed to ensure no discriminatory impact.

8. Financial and Resource Implications

- 8.1 The cost of sickness absence across the council in Q1 was approximately £240k; it is therefore important that we continue to monitor and reduce absence levels.

9. Major Risks & Mitigation

- 9.1 Should the council fail to address absence levels this would have a negative impact both financially but more importantly on the wellness of our people. By addressing our processes and support we mitigate this risk and seek to improve the wellbeing of our workforce.

10. UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)

- 10.1 This report relates to the wellness of our workforce. In that respect, the project supports the realisation of the following UNSDG objectives:-

3 GOOD HEALTH
AND WELL-BEING



11. Key Decision Information

11.1 n/a

12. Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions

12.1 n/a

13. List of Appendices

13.1 Sickness Absence report update

14. Background Papers

14.1 None.