

## **Report to Joint Consultative and Safety Committee**

**Subject:      Sickness Absence: summary of current trends**

**Date:            6 June 2023**

**Author:         Head of HR, Performance and Service Planning**

### **1. Purpose of the Report**

This is an information item to inform the Committee of the current levels of sickness absence in the organisation and to examine trends. Relevant data is shown at Appendix 1 and Appendix 2; officers will present a verbal report on the context of this data.

As part of the introduction of this item officers will also highlight to the Committee through verbal report, any matters of particular current interest in respect to absence management.

### **2. Recommendation**

The Committee is asked to note this report.

### **3. Summary of key data**

- The summary of trends graph in Appendix 1 shows the outturn for absence for the full year up to March 2023 at 8.28 days. This is an exceptionally good result and is below the target of nine days lost per full-time equivalent employee per year. The Council has been below this target for the previous two months but at the start of the year, rates of absence were running at 11.64 days lost. This represents an improvement of almost 30% between the worst and best months of the year (based on the “year to date” figures).
- At year-end last year the full year outturn was almost 25% above target. In part this was due to the continued effects of Covid with over a quarter of all absences in March last year being due to this reason and over the full year the absence rate due to Covid was over 13%. This year the rate has halved and is now just over 6%.
- Active management of long-term cases of absence continues with regular training being offered to managers to help them to effectively support employees back to work. The number of long-term cases of absence at the end of this year stands at five which is about average for the year. It is recognised that long-term absence does have a material effect on the overall absence rate with long-term sickness in March accounting for over 40% of all working days lost. In addition to training the Council also gives access to a 24/7 counselling and talking therapy service for all employees as well as a fast-track physiotherapy service through referral by HR.

- Appendix 2 shows the reasons for absence over the last financial year. The top three reasons for absence were; depression or stress (not necessarily work-related), post-operative recovery and muscular/ skeletal problems. The table also shows the reasons for absence for last year.

Last year there has been a marked increase in the amount of absence due to depression and stress. The last employee survey did indicate that 34% of people felt that their mental health had worsened during lock-down. The high level of absence due to this reason has remained high again over the last year.

Measures that have been put into place to support employees include:

- An online bespoke mental health awareness package has been made available across the Council
- There has been continued active promotion of the Council's employee assistance programme (EAP) that is open to all employees and offers a variety of "talking therapies" as well as general relationship and financial advice and signposting. This service is publicised not only on the intranet but also by means of posters at the depot and leisure centres.
- Two training courses were delivered through external provision at the start of this year. The courses aimed to provide support both to team members who may have felt that they needed help to improve their mental health and also to team managers to help them to support members of their team.

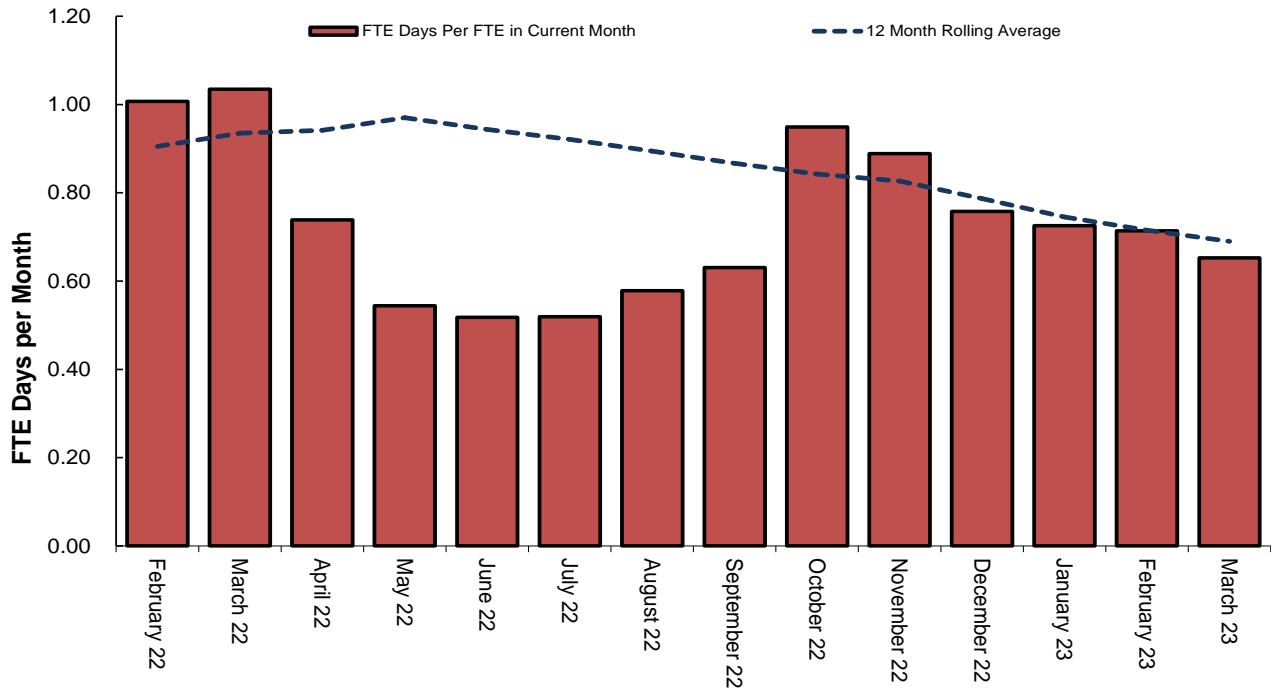
The level of absence relating to muscular/ skeletal is a little higher than last year. Similar to issues of "back pain" that was one of the top reasons for absence last year, the cases predominantly fall within front-line areas of the business. The Council has a fast-track referral scheme for physiotherapy to help support people with medical problems that relate to mobility issues.

Although post-operative recovery is also one of the top three reasons for absence this year, other than to be generally supportive and looking for creative ways to assist people to make a return at the earliest safe opportunity (things like applying a "phased return") it is hard to be able to influence the rates of absence for such cases.

Overall, the managers of the Council remain focussed on sickness absence as an issue and recognise its importance from a financial, business and social perspective.

Summary of trends graph; year to date at March 2023

Summary of Trends



Month	Total Absence %	12 Month Average (%)	FTE Days per FTE in Current Month	FTE Days per FTE 12 Month Average	FTE Days per FTE per Month Average
February 22	5.04	4.25	1.01	10.86	0.91
March 22	4.50	4.35	1.03	11.22	0.94
April 22	3.89	4.39	0.74	11.30	0.94
May 22	2.59	4.36	0.54	11.64	0.97
June 22	2.35	4.31	0.52	11.32	0.94
July 22	2.47	4.19	0.52	11.05	0.92
August 22	2.63	4.09	0.58	10.73	0.89
September 22	3.00	3.98	0.63	10.40	0.87
October 22	4.52	3.90	0.95	10.11	0.84
November 22	4.04	3.82	0.89	9.92	0.83
December 22	3.99	3.70	0.76	9.44	0.79
January 23	3.46	3.54	0.73	8.94	0.75
February 23	3.57	3.42	0.71	8.58	0.72
March 23	2.84	3.28	0.65	8.28	0.69

## Year to date absence data, by service area with six month trend

### Days Lost Per FTE Employee: Year to March 2023

### Year to date trend

Service	Section	Fte At Start	Fte At End	Average Fte	No Emps Sick FTE	FTE Days Lost	FTE Days Lost per FTE	% Rate of absence	Days lost	Days lost	Days lost	Days lost	Days lost	Days lost
									1 month ago	2 months ago	3 months ago	4 months ago	5 months ago	6 months ago
Corporate Resources	Customer Services	19.78	18.18	18.98	14.46	469.47	24.74	9.82%	24.79	23.17	22.37	22.15	21.77	19.85
	Democratic Services and H&S	7.69	9.30	8.49	5.61	32.06	3.77	1.50%	4.03	4.64	4.38	3.93	2.19	1.83
	Financial Services	11.54	9.43	10.49	5.93	46.10	4.40	1.74%	5.17	6.03	5.38	4.09	4.24	4.91
	HR, Performance and Svs Planning	4.74	4.95	4.84	1.59	6.58	1.36	0.54%	2.95	2.95	2.80	2.80	2.08	2.04
	Information & Communications Technology	8.00	8.00	8.00	4.00	102.00	12.75	5.06%	12.63	11.13	9.63	9.50	10.13	9.38
	Legal Services	4.46	3.65	4.05	1.81	17.41	4.29	1.70%	4.92	4.42	4.60	4.60	4.60	4.17
	Revenues	12.17	12.17	12.17	5.72	50.09	4.12	1.63%	3.68	3.38	3.59	3.42	2.92	3.56
		3.00	2.00	2.50	1.00	2.00	0.80	0.32%	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.67
<b>Service Total:</b>		<b>71.37</b>	<b>67.68</b>	<b>69.53</b>	<b>40.12</b>	<b>725.71</b>	<b>10.44</b>	<b>4.14%</b>						
Environment, Communities & Leisure	Community Relations	4.95	4.95	4.95	1.65	16.86	3.41	1.35%	3.41	3.41	4.07	4.07	4.41	4.41
	Leisure Services	55.15	55.20	55.18	30.36	317.49	5.75	2.28%	6.43	6.94	8.07	8.99	9.78	10.60
	Parks and Street Care	51.61	49.61	50.61	34.36	729.13	14.41	5.72%	15.01	16.79	17.99	19.34	20.19	20.57
	Public Protection	30.11	31.11	30.61	14.76	152.24	4.97	1.97%	4.69	4.64	4.54	4.50	4.61	3.64
	Transport and Waste	62.04	57.76	59.90	32.38	477.72	7.98	3.16%	8.33	8.33	9.71	10.92	11.40	13.03
		3.00	2.00	2.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.67
<b>Service Total:</b>		<b>206.86</b>	<b>200.63</b>	<b>203.74</b>	<b>113.51</b>	<b>1693.45</b>	<b>8.31</b>	<b>3.30%</b>						
Regeneration, Development and Comms	Communications	4.50	4.50	4.50	2.00	8.00	1.78	0.71%	1.48	1.48	1.48	0.59	1.16	1.30
	Development Services	16.69	15.69	16.19	4.00	100.00	6.18	2.45%	6.18	5.99	5.99	4.61	2.70	1.44
	Economic Growth and Regeneration	4.00	4.54	4.27	1.00	10.00	2.34	0.93%	2.29	0.46	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Facilities- Community Centres	3.81	2.81	3.31	2.59	97.57	29.47	11.69%	33.55	36.34	39.61	42.58	40.11	35.49
	Planning Policy	4.05	3.05	3.55	0.84	8.18	2.30	0.91%	2.02	2.02	1.93	0.73	0.25	0.25
	Projects	0.00	1.00	0.50	1.00	1.49	2.97	1.18%	2.97	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Property	8.15	10.15	9.15	4.70	73.30	8.01	3.18%	8.73	10.45	12.36	14.74	17.39	19.41
	Welfare Support	16.83	17.49	17.16	7.93	53.19	3.10	1.23%	2.88	3.89	3.77	4.03	4.20	4.29
		3.00	3.00	3.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.13%	1.00	1.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	1.00
<b>Service Total:</b>		<b>61.04</b>	<b>62.24</b>	<b>61.64</b>	<b>25.07</b>	<b>352.72</b>	<b>5.72</b>	<b>2.27%</b>						
<b>Grand Total:</b>		<b>339.27</b>	<b>330.55</b>	<b>334.91</b>	<b>178.70</b>	<b>2771.88</b>	<b>8.28</b>	<b>3.28%</b>	<b>8.58</b>	<b>8.94</b>	<b>9.44</b>	<b>9.92</b>	<b>10.11</b>	<b>10.40</b>

## Current month's absence data, by service area with six month trend

### Days lost per FTE employee: March 2023

### Current month trend

Service	Section	Fte At Start	Fte At End	Average Fte	No Emps Sick FTE	FTE Days Lost	FTE Days Lost per FTE	% Absence	Days lost	Days lost	Days lost	Days lost	Days lost	Days lost
									1 month ago	2 months ago	3 months ago	4 months ago	5 months ago	6 months ago
Corporate Resources	Customer Services	18.18	18.18	18.18	1.51	11.40	0.63	2.73%	1.59	2.46	2.46	2.87	3.43	3.05
	Democratic Services and H&S	9.30	9.30	9.30	0.50	0.83	0.09	0.39%	0.09	0.00	0.54	0.65	0.51	0.00
	Financial Services	9.43	9.43	9.43	0.50	0.83	0.09	0.38%	0.00	1.63	1.56	0.10	0.44	0.00
	HR, Performance and Svs Planning	4.95	4.95	4.95	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.72	0.04	0.00
	Information & Communications Technology	8.00	8.00	8.00	1.00	18.00	2.25	9.78%	2.50	2.75	1.25	0.00	1.13	0.00
	Legal Services	3.65	3.65	3.65	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.43	0.00
	Revenues	12.17	12.17	12.17	1.81	9.80	0.81	3.50%	0.41	0.00	0.17	0.49	0.41	0.00
		3.00	2.00	2.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.67
<b>Service Total:</b>		<b>68.68</b>	<b>67.68</b>	<b>68.18</b>	<b>5.32</b>	<b>40.86</b>	<b>0.60</b>	<b>2.61%</b>						
Environment, Communities & Leisure	Community Relations	4.95	4.95	4.95	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Leisure Services	54.80	55.20	55.00	5.93	27.77	0.50	2.20%	0.28	0.32	0.30	0.19	0.49	0.89
	Parks and Street Care	49.61	49.61	49.61	6.00	59.27	1.19	5.19%	1.10	1.26	1.55	1.91	2.33	1.03
	Public Protection	31.11	31.11	31.11	2.76	13.58	0.44	1.90%	0.70	0.42	0.49	0.95	1.27	0.31
	Transport and Waste	58.76	57.76	58.26	7.86	56.24	0.97	4.20%	1.04	0.43	0.15	0.82	0.10	0.29
		2.00	2.00	2.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>Service Total:</b>		<b>201.22</b>	<b>200.63</b>	<b>200.93</b>	<b>22.55</b>	<b>156.86</b>	<b>0.78</b>	<b>3.39%</b>						
Regeneration, Development and Comms	Communications	4.50	4.50	4.50	1.00	3.00	0.67	2.90%	0.00	0.00	1.11	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Development Services	15.69	15.69	15.69	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00%	0.00	0.00	1.86	2.04	1.26	0.72
	Economic Growth and Regeneration	3.73	4.54	4.14	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00%	1.69	0.42	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Facilities- Community Centres	2.81	2.81	2.81	0.65	14.92	5.31	23.08%	5.14	6.66	5.08	5.08	4.85	0.46
	Planning Policy	4.05	3.05	3.55	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00%	0.00	0.00	1.19	0.48	0.00	0.00
	Projects	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Property	10.15	10.15	10.15	0.27	0.81	0.08	0.35%	0.48	0.40	0.03	0.00	1.26	1.62
Welfare Support	18.08	17.49	17.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00%	0.17	0.94	0.33	0.06	0.17	0.00	
		3.00	3.00	3.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>Service Total:</b>		<b>63.02</b>	<b>62.24</b>	<b>62.63</b>	<b>1.92</b>	<b>18.73</b>	<b>0.30</b>	<b>1.30%</b>						
<b>Grand Total:</b>		<b>332.92</b>	<b>330.55</b>	<b>331.74</b>	<b>29.78</b>	<b>216.45</b>	<b>0.65</b>	<b>2.84%</b>	<b>0.71</b>	<b>0.73</b>	<b>0.76</b>	<b>0.89</b>	<b>0.95</b>	<b>0.63</b>

## Long term (20 days+ in month)/ short term sickness analysis for March 2023

### Analysis of Short and Long Term Absence - March 2023

Head of Service	Section	No Occurrences Long Term	Total No Occurrences Absent	Long Term FTE Days Lost	Total FTE Days Lost	Long Term as a % of Days Lost	Long Term as a % of Occurrences
Corporate Resources	Customer Services	0	2	0.00	11.16	0.00%	0.00%
	Democratic Services and H&S	0	1	0.00	0.82	0.00%	0.00%
	Financial Services	0	1	0.00	0.82	0.00%	0.00%
	Information & Communications Technology	0	1	0.00	17.61	0.00%	0.00%
	Revenues	0	2	0.00	9.77	0.00%	0.00%
Head of Service Total:		0	7	0.00	40.19	0.00%	0.00%
Environment, Communities	Leisure Services	0	12	0.00	29.13	0.00%	0.00%
	Parks and Street Care	2	7	42.07	58.26	72.21%	28.57%
	Public Protection	1	3	9.09	13.00	69.91%	33.33%
	Transport and Waste	1	8	22.50	55.10	40.84%	12.50%
Head of Service Total:		4	30	73.66	155.50	47.37%	13.33%
Regeneration, Development	Communications	0	1	0.00	2.94	0.00%	0.00%
	Facilities- Community Centres	1	1	13.92	13.92	100.00%	100.00%
	Property	0	1	0.00	0.81	0.00%	0.00%
Head of Service Total:		1	3	13.92	17.67	78.80%	33.33%
Grand Total:		5	40	87.59	213.36	41.05%	12.50%

## Sickness Reasons April 2022- March 2023

Reason	Working days lost: Self-certified	Working days lost: Medically certified	CURRENT YEAR Days lost per condition as a % of total days lost	LAST YEAR Days lost per condition as a % of total days lost
(0000) Unknown or unspecified sickness absence	2	0	0.07%	1.31%
(0001) Injury at work	0	0	0.00%	0.12%
(0002) Injury, not at work	22	166	6.29%	1.12%
(0003) Respiratory system problems	54	28	2.74%	1.07%
(0004) Cold, flu, sore throat or similar	202	96	9.97%	5.63%
(0005) Digestion	81	35	3.88%	5.25%
(0006) Depression, stress or similar	36	746	26.16%	25.76%
(0007) Headache, migraine or similar	18	8	0.87%	0.73%
(0008) Pregnancy- related	11	27	1.27%	0.10%
(0009) Gynaecological problems	12.5	24	1.22%	0.19%
(0010) Operation or post-operative recovery	19	426	14.89%	12.62%
(0011) Hospital visit	2.5	45	1.59%	0.36%
(0012) Kidney problem or similar	13	0	0.43%	0.38%
(0013) Heart or circulation problems	11	21	1.07%	3.17%
(0015) Arthritis, rheumatism or similar	1	10	0.37%	0.17%
(0016) Dental problems	5	0	0.17%	0.00%
(0018) Nasal problems	3	0	0.10%	0.00%
(0019) Dizziness, vertigo or similar	2	1	0.10%	0.07%
(0020) Other reason for absence	27	56	2.78%	1.86%
(0021) Problems with glands	4	0	0.13%	0.00%
(0022) Problems with ears	8	0	0.27%	0.14%
(0023) Problems with eyes	5	0	0.17%	0.41%
(0024) Viral infection (not cold etc)	15	22	1.24%	0.17%
(0025) Back problem	25	173	6.62%	13.74%
(0026) Muscular/ skeletal problems (not back)	45	281	10.90%	8.68%
(0027) Cancer Treatment (not screening visits)	0	7	0.23%	3.53%
(0030) Coronavirus	123.5	65	6.31%	13.43%
(029) Swine Flu	5	0	0.17%	0.00%
	<b>752.5</b>	<b>2237</b>		