

Report of the Director of Resources & Housing

Report to the Scrutiny Board (Strategy & Resources)

Date: 11th February 2019

Subject: Employee Health and Wellbeing

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): n/a	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of Main Issues

The health and wellbeing of employees in any organisation is important due to the impact on productivity, engagement, sickness absence, presenteeism and innovation. The moral aspect is also important, no more so than in a local authority whose workforce can also be its citizens. The Chief Executive recognises this and has recently made 'Healthy Organisation' one of Leeds City Council's key ambitions within the Best Council Plan and challenged all directors and their direct reports to play a pro-active role as Wellbeing Champions.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board note this report as an overview of employee health and wellbeing and provides any comment.

1. Purpose of this Report

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the papers provided to Scrutiny Board in January 2018 relating to employee health and wellbeing, especially in light of the Chief Executive's recent commitment to creating an 'Enterprising, Efficient and **Healthy** organisation'.
- 1.2 The report includes: a position statement on attendance; details of the work undertaken throughout 2018 to improve the health and wellbeing of Leeds City Council employees; and a summary of interventions planned for 2019.
- 1.3 The previous reports are attached as Appendix A to this report, as it is noted that many new Elected Members took office in May 2018.

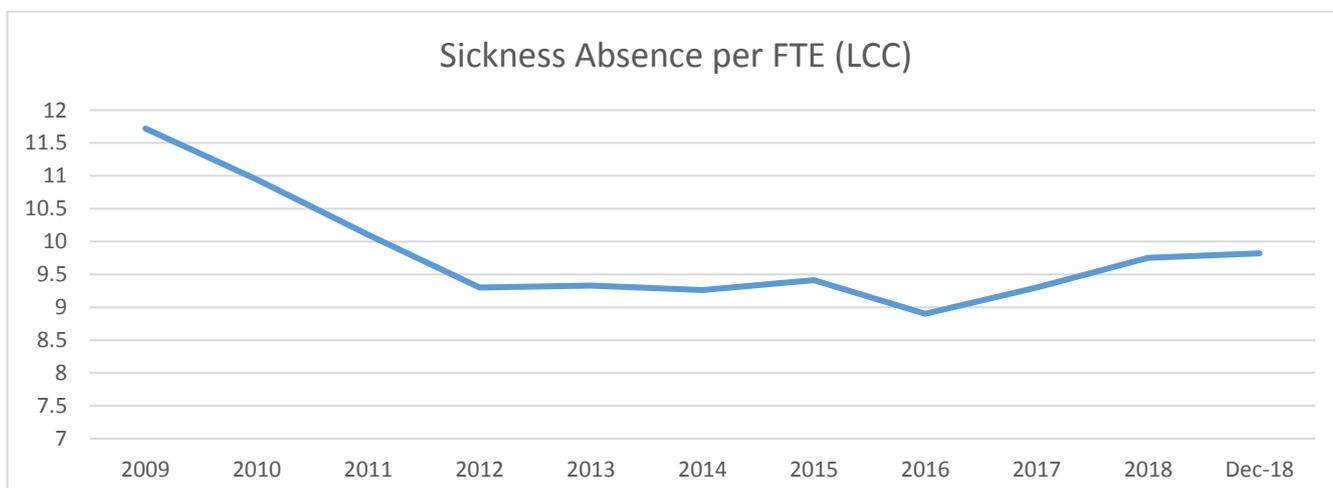
2. Background Information

- 2.1 Leeds City Council formally introduced a three year Employee Wellbeing Strategy in 2016, which has since been extended to 2021 by the council's senior leadership team. This was after a review illustrated that the strategy was becoming much better known amongst the workforce and the agreed actions were having a positive impact. The key priorities of: mental wellbeing; physical health; healthy lifestyles; and a culture of wellbeing, were also found to be still relevant.
- 2.2 At the council's Leadership Conference on 16th October 2018, the Chief Executive announced that he wanted everyone to focus on creating a 'healthy organisation' and prioritised this alongside other long-standing ambitions. This was reinforced by the design of new interventions and 'invest to save' funding.
- 2.3 Sickness absence has remained a challenge, but the early signs are that targeted work in certain services has started to impact positively on attendance.

3. Main Issues

3.1 Sickness Absence in Leeds City Council

- 3.1.1 Figure 1, below, illustrates the sickness absence trend in LCC from 2009 to December 2018. The current trajectory shows a plateauing of the sharp rise indicated between 2016 and 2018.



3.1.2 The infographic, below, illustrates the possible experiences of a Leeds City Council employee based on their age, where they live and where they work – based on current council statistics.



3.1.3 Targeted approach to reducing sickness absence

One example of a more targeted and bespoke approach to reducing sickness absence in services was in Housing Management, where interventions have included:

<p>Training</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refresher training on Improving Attendance Policy; • Difficult Conversations training delivered at Housing Leadership Team meeting and Housing Managers Away Day; • Occupational Health briefing was delivered at a Housing Managers meeting by an Occupational Health Adviser to ensure we are getting the best from Occupational Health referrals; • Managers encouraged to attend Stress Awareness Training; • Let's Talk Stress session – promoted in weekly publication Housing Leeds Matters and a number of Housing Officers/Assistants attended; • HR use coaching style to support managers with improving attendance in their teams; • An aspiration to have a Mental Health First Aider (MHFA) in every housing office – currently 9 people have been trained. This role is being promoted in Housing Leeds Matters and the Chief Officer and other Senior Managers will be trained to be MHFAs to show their commitment to this role. • Managers are being coached on how to hold effective return to work meetings by HR Officers.
<p>Engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 People Plans launched May 2018: <i>Employee Engagement; Employee Development; Equality & Inclusion; Health, Safety and Wellbeing.</i> • 64 employees have volunteered to become People Champions to support the service to deliver these improvement plans. These people are key in establishing how people are feeling and contributing to the Wellbeing Plan. Each People Champion has driven forward initiatives in their own teams. Stories/ideas shared with all colleagues in weekly bulletin; • The 4 People Plans clearly interlink and have all had a positive effect on employee wellbeing. An interim engagement survey has just been completed to obtain feedback from staff on the 4 People Plans; • Attendance case review meetings are held monthly to help managers with improving attendance; • An 'Outstanding Triggers' report is shared with managers every month to ensure meetings are held in a timely manner; • The Chief Officer holds regular sickness challenge meetings with managers. Best practice is shared and the key message is embedded of "how people are feeling and how we are supporting each other given the frontline challenging job we do"; • Wellbeing is on all Management Team agendas;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sickness figures shared with managers every month and hot spot areas identified.
Peer Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff attended the Healthy Minds Event in October 2018; • People Champions regularly share initiatives to improve wellbeing; • All staff networks are regularly promoted in Housing Leeds Matters weekly publication and attendance is encouraged; • Housing have set up their own regular Mindfulness sessions –offshoot of Healthy Minds Group; • A Carers Event set up specifically for Housing.
Health Checks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The service is working with Public Health - over 35 sessions were held across the city where Housing employees had their blood pressure checked and were given advice or signposted to their GP if necessary.

The early signs are that this work is starting to have a positive impact:

Sickness Levels in Housing Management		
2016/17	2017/18	Dec 2018
12.57	11.30	11.20

3.2 Employee Health and Wellbeing Interventions

3.2.1 The previous papers, submitted to Scrutiny Board in 2018, provided a lot of detail in terms of the support offered to all staff to enhance wellbeing and improve attendance. These will not be repeated here (see Appendix 1), but work undertaken since then is summarised below.

Priority 1: A Culture of Wellbeing

- ✓ The Chief Executive and his Leadership Team have committed to making a 'Healthy Workplace' as one of the council's key ambitions.
- ✓ The Chief Executive has charged all Directors and their direct reports to become 'Wellbeing Champions' for their services and to recruit more Champions from amongst their workforce.
- ✓ HR are working with the Communications Team to design a poster campaign. This will inform all staff of what is available and how to access it. HR are also working with the Insite team to ensure we use our internal website in the best way possible to support this campaign and beyond.
- ✓ The Disabled Staff Network has been relaunched to become a Disability and Wellbeing Network. There is a detailed action plan for the organisation to improve the experience of disabled colleagues and the Council is working with an external partner to enable it to sign up to Disability Confident Level 3.
- ✓ A Supporting Colleagues at Work Charter is being developed together with key stakeholders. An engagement event was held in June 2018 and the process for encouraging Wellbeing Conversations between a manager and their team members is being trialled in certain services.

- ✓ Funding has been made available to allow every service in the council access a small amount of money to start something that will improve the health and wellbeing of their staff.
- ✓ The in-house Occupational Health Service has started to become more pro-active to help prevent ill health and enhance wellbeing, rather than just responding to sickness absence referrals.

Priority 2: Mental Wellbeing

- ✓ More collaboration between Public Health, Mindful Employer, Mental Health Services in Adult Social Care, Human Resources and the Peer Support Group, Healthy Minds.
- ✓ LCC HR is leading on a collaboration between all health and care providers across Leeds relating to Mental Health First Aid Training.
- ✓ LCC HR has seconded a Mental Health First Aid Trainer, with the target of training a minimum of 500 staff to become Mental Health First Aiders.
- ✓ Large and small events took place as part of World Mental Health Day in October.
- ✓ Funding has been secured to trial a scheme whereby an employee calling in sick with a mental health related issue will be contacted as soon as possible by an independent mental health specialist to offer support. This will hopefully also reduce the length of absence.
- ✓ A joint working group with the Trade unions and HR has been established to try and reduce mental health related absence in targeted services. This involves working with services at a local level to develop action plans based on their own needs.
- ✓ A new Employee Assistance Programme is currently out for tender. This will not only build on the successful self-referral for counselling, but require a much more pro-active approach from the provider in terms of marketing and increasing awareness.
- ✓ An event for all Head teachers in Leeds was held on 16th November 2018 to promote the 'Headspace' programme which provides Head teachers with peer group and professional support to help maintain their mental wellbeing.
- ✓ IAPT (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies) is also working with LCC with a view to delivering free mental health training for council employees.

Priority 3: Physical Health

- ✓ Funding has been secured to trial a scheme whereby an employee calling in sick with a musculo-skeletal disorder will be contacted as soon as possible by an independent Physiotherapist to offer support. This will hopefully also reduce the length of absence.
- ✓ Work is underway to look at the impact of work on an ageing workforce and how this can be planned for in the future in terms of job design.
- ✓ Pro-active work was undertaken within services for a Back Care Awareness Week, including the Physiotherapists.

Priority 4: Healthy Lifestyles

- ✓ Work has been undertaken, through an externally funded project, to carry out targeted blood pressure testing in council buildings and workplaces. Certain groups of staff were prioritised in year one to ensure the best use of a limited resource e.g. those who may not access healthcare routinely. The project is now moving into year 2 and will allow a broader scope on who (and where) testing can take place.
- ✓ Whilst free flu vaccinations have been offered to staff in caring roles for the past few years, this year it has been extended to council staff working with members of the public in customer hubs.

- ✓ Healthy Weight – work is ongoing to support the health and wellbeing of staff by increasing knowledge and understanding of unhealthy weight.
- ✓ Active travel initiatives to support physical exercise.

4. Future Developments and next steps

- 4.1 The previous report for Scrutiny Board listed a number of future actions, all of which are now well underway or complete.
- 4.2 The approach for 2019-2020 will be to ensure there is a well-publicised wellbeing offer for all staff, whilst recognising the need to take a bespoke approach to meet the needs of certain services and staff.

5. Consultation and Engagement

- 5.1 No work around this agenda, especially the desired culture change, can be successful without meaningful consultation and partnership working with a variety of stakeholders, within and external to LCC. Within LCC key stakeholders will be Trade Unions, service managers, Public Health, Elected Members and CLT.

6. Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 6.1 The link between sickness absence/ill health and certain protected characteristics was discussed in the earlier report. Any interventions and strategies will be designed to address specific needs and to try and ensure that there is no adverse impact on specific groups.

7. Council Policies and Best Council Plan

- 7.1 Most employment policies could have a direct or indirect impact on health, wellbeing and attendance and the previous report illustrated those policies that have and are about to be revised/developed.
- 7.2 Leeds City Council will continue to have a unique role to play across the city as inward investment increases, at the same time as it has some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the country. This health inequality can be addressed through employers and those who provide services – LCC has enormous influence here.

8. Resources and Value for Money

- 8.1 The previous report considered the costs of absenteeism and presenteeism. It is pleased to note that funding has since been made available to invest in projects to improve wellbeing and reduce sickness absence.

9. Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- 9.1 In managing attendance there is a legal duty to comply with employment law. Also relevant here is compliance with the Equality Act and Health and Safety legislation.
- 9.2 All employment information relating to sickness absence is managed in accordance with Data Protection legislation.
- 9.3 Nothing in the report would be subject to call-in.

10. Risk Management

10.1 Improving attendance and employee health and wellbeing is one of the key council risks. This is due to the costs of sickness absence, the impact of presenteeism, reputation and potential for legal challenge. This report and the previous reports are intended to explain how these risks are managed both now and in the future. Health and Safety is also on the Corporate Risk Register and, as it's a standing risk, an annual assurance report is usually prepared on it.

11.0 Conclusions

11.1 Reducing sickness absence continues to be challenging, but this is being tackled in relevant services through a basket of interventions which include: training, procedural change, culture change, a bespoke and enhanced wellbeing offer and appropriate challenge.

11.2 The Chief Executive has committed to an ambition of a healthy organisation and challenged his senior leaders to play a pro-active role in this. This has been backed with invest to save funding.

11.3 The cross-council and service-specific wellbeing offer continues to develop and become better known.

11.4 The council recognises its city wide role as an exemplar employer, provider of services and an influencer. This is recognised in the work to become a Disability Confident Level 3 Leader and the project involving the Health and Care workforce across Leeds.

12.0 Recommendations

12.1 It is recommended that the Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board note this report as an overview of employee health and wellbeing.

12.2 Comments regarding the content of this report are welcomed.

13.0 Background documents¹

13.1 None.

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.