

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Personnel Committee - 16 October 2006

REPORT ON: Sickness Absence Management - Progress Report on Action Plan

REPORT BY: Assistant Chief Executive (Management)

REPORT NO: 519-2006

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide members with a progress report on the Sickness Absence Action Plan approved by the Personnel Committee on 15 August 2005.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Personnel Committee considers the information contained in Appendix A attached and notes the progress made.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The cost of sickness absence to the City Council in terms of direct expenditure was £5.75 million in 2004/05. The City Council, like most other public sector employers, pays employees (depending on length of service) full pay for up to 6 months when they are off ill. The cost of such sick pay is budgeted for as gross pay; what is not budgeted for is the cost of temporary cover and overtime cover, and the adverse effects of absence on service delivery.

4 SUSTAINABILITY POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None.

5 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None.

6 BACKGROUND

- 6.1 At its meeting of 15 August 2005, the Personnel Committee considered Report No 485-2005 (Sickness Absence Management) by the Assistant Chief Executive (Management) and noted and approved a Sickness Absence Action Plan which had been approved by the Council Management Team in June 2005.

7 SICKNESS ABSENCE FIGURES

- 7.1 The Council's sickness absence figures have reduced from 2004/05 to 2005/06. This is illustrated by the following performance indicator information forwarded to Audit Scotland:-

	2004/05	2005/06
<u>Indicator 1</u>		
% of days lost due to sickness for Chief Officers and Local Government Employees	5.9	5.4
<u>Indicator 2</u>		
% days lost due to sickness for Craft Employees	7.5	6.9
<u>Indicator 3</u>		
% days lost due to sickness for Teachers	5.0	4.2

- 7.2 Audit Scotland have not, as yet, published the Scotland-wide figures for 2005/06 to allow the City Council's performance to be measured against other Councils. However, the following comparison is possible:-

	Scotland-wide 2004/05	City Council 2005/06
<u>Indicator 1</u>		
% of days lost due to sickness for Chief Officers and Local Government Employees	5.5	5.4
<u>Indicator 2</u>		
% days lost due to sickness for Craft Employees	5.9	6.9
<u>Indicator 3</u>		
% days lost due to sickness for Teachers	3.7	4.2

8 PROGRESS REPORT ON ACTION PLAN

- 8.1 Appendix A attached contains the sickness absence management action plan and outlines the recommendations, actions and progress to date.

9 **CONSULTATION**

- 9.1 The Chief Executive has been consulted in the preparation of this report, as have the trade unions.

10 **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 10.1 None.

J C Petrie
Assistant Chief Executive (Management)

6 October 2006

SICKNESS ABSENCE MANAGEMENT - ACTION PLAN
(approved by Personnel Committee on 15 August 2005)

1 RECOMMENDATION

The Council's current sickness absence procedure states that:-

"an employee will be liable to be called to a formal interview to discuss their absence record:-

- i) when the absence record is significantly worse than those of comparable employees;
- ii) when the absence record creates a particular operational difficulty;
- iii) when the employee has been absent on 3 or more occasions, or for a total of 6 working days over a rolling 6 month period;
- iv) when the employee is about to go on half pay or no pay, in accordance with their sickness allowance entitlement."

It is recommended that consideration be given to the following amendments to the Council's sickness absence procedure subject to consultation with the trade unions:-

- add a further trigger of 5 absences or 10 days over 12 months to convene a formal meeting;
- add a further trigger of 4 weeks of continuous absence to initiate contact with an employee with consideration being given to convening a formal meeting;
- include as a potential course of action for dealing with persistent short term absence the removal of self certification;
- make it a requirement for a sickness absence meeting to be convened when a trigger is reached. Management discretion to remain, however, in deciding what action, if any, is required to be taken;
- include a monitoring period as an option for dealing with repeated periods of long term absence by inserting "provide the opportunity for improvement in the absence record over a reasonable period of time during which the record will continue to be assessed".

ACTION

The trade unions have been consulted on the amended sickness absence procedure and following representation from departments the amended procedure will take effect from 1 October 2005. The procedure and covering letter are attached as Appendix 1 and will be issued to employees by 30 September 2005.

A Guidance Note outlining the changes will be issued to managers/supervisors with responsibility for dealing with absence.

PROGRESS REPORT

Both actions completed.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Personnel Department will review the content of current sickness absence training in light of feedback received from focus groups. Sessions tailored to specific departmental needs.

ACTION

The Personnel Department has revised the Sickness Absence training in light of amendments to the procedure and in line with Health and Safety Executive guidance. Training will be available from 1 September 2005.

PROGRESS REPORT

Training has been provided to over 400 managers and supervisors, and continues.

3 RECOMMENDATION

All departments to review their sickness absence reporting arrangements to ensure compliance with procedure. In particular, ensure that the employee reports, in person, the absence to his/her line manager (or nominated officer) within the appropriate timescale. Reissue the procedure to employees if necessary.

Amend the sickness absence reporting procedure in relation to sickness absence continuing for eight days or more from "In addition, where the illness extends beyond seven days, you should notify your line manager of the position at intervals of no more than seven days" to "... at intervals of no more than fourteen days".

ACTION

Line managers to ensure that all employees fully understand the sickness absence reporting procedure.

PROGRESS REPORT

Action completed.

4 RECOMMENDATION

The Assistant Chief Executive (Management) to produce a corporate self certification form to ensure information is recorded consistently including that a return to work interview has been carried out.

ACTION

With effect from 1 July 2005, departments are using the corporate self certification form attached as Appendix 3.

PROGRESS REPORT

Action completed.

5 RECOMMENDATION

Departments to ensure managers carrying out return to work interviews have access to information in relation to the employees' sickness absence levels.

ACTION

With immediate effect, departments will ensure that the appropriate information is made available to line managers.

PROGRESS REPORT

Action completed.

6 RECOMMENDATION

The Assistant Chief Executive (Management) to produce guidelines for departments on the production of monthly management reports. All departments to provide managers with appropriate monthly absence reports to assist in managing absence.

ACTION

With immediate effect, departments to review the availability of management information, including the standard absence report already available. Where necessary, arrangements should be put in place to provide managers with reports detailing absences over the last 12 months for all of their employees, highlighting if a trigger has been met.

PROGRESS REPORT

Action completed.

7 RECOMMENDATION

The management of sickness absence levels to be a regular item on Departmental management team agendas.

ACTION

Departments to put arrangements in place with immediate effect.

PROGRESS REPORT

Action completed.

8 RECOMMENDATION

All departments to nominate a senior officer who will be responsible for implementing the recommendations contained within this report at departmental level. This officer will 'audit' a random sample of absence cases on a monthly basis to ensure that the policy is being applied.

ACTION

Nominations have been forwarded to the Assistant Chief Executive (Management). The nominated officer in each department will also be the contact for the Personnel teams for the ongoing review of the effectiveness of the sickness absence policy.

PROGRESS REPORT

Action completed.

9 RECOMMENDATION

Consideration be given to the introduction of a self referral system for counselling on a 6 month pilot basis. Attendance at counselling to be in an employee's own time.

ACTION

A self referral system for counselling is not financially viable at present.

PROGRESS REPORT

A self referral system for counselling is not financially viable at present.

10 RECOMMENDATION

Introduce a physiotherapy service. Appointments to be made by management referral. The service will be offered, where appropriate, to employees absent on sick leave or in cases where treatment would prevent an absence.

ACTION

A pilot physiotherapy service has been introduced. Pilot to be reviewed and the Assistant Chief Executive (Management) will report to Council Management Team.

PROGRESS REPORT

The pilot service has been introduced and the initial views of employees and departments are favourable. A report will be submitted to the Council Management Team by the end of 2006.

11 RECOMMENDATION

Develop 'trigger' reports on the new payroll/personnel system to be made available to all departments.

ACTION

To be developed as part of transfer to new payroll/personnel system.

PROGRESS REPORT

Will be developed as part of the transfer to the new payroll/personnel system.

12 RECOMMENDATION

Raise employees' awareness of the importance of good attendance by sharing information on costs, implications of absence, etc. Assistant Chief Executive (Management) to draft briefing note to be communicated to all employees at team meetings.

ACTION

Assistant Chief Executive (Management) working on guidelines/briefing note. Will be available in October 2005. A special edition of Feedback will be produced in 2005.

PROGRESS REPORT

The Assistant Chief Executive (Management) decided that the issue of a joint management/trade union statement on the necessity to reduce absence levels would be beneficial. The vast majority of the trade unions have signed up to this and this will be issued to employees by the end of October 2006.

13 RECOMMENDATION

Continue to promote flexible working practices including the development of a Home Working policy.

ACTION

Assistant Chief Executive (Management) producing a report on flexible working. Will be submitted to Council Management Team in August 2005.

PROGRESS REPORT

Report No 705-2005 (Flexible Working) was considered and approved by the Personnel Committee on 12 December 2005 and details have been circulated to all employees.

14 RECOMMENDATION

Continue to promote health promotion through the attainment of Scotland's Health at Work and continue to encourage sharing of good practice via Scotland's Health at Work Co-ordinators Group.

ACTION

Ongoing.

PROGRESS REPORT

Eleven departments have attained the Scotland's Health at Work bronze award and the others are working towards this. One department has attained the silver award.

15 RECOMMENDATION

The Assistant Chief Executive (Management) in conjunction with the Public Health Improvement Officer to explore options for corporate health promotion for employees.

ACTION

Ongoing.

PROGRESS REPORT

Corporate health promotion is delivered through departments' Scotland's Health at Work efforts.

16 RECOMMENDATION

Departments to set targets. Targets to be approved by the Chief Executive and Assistant Chief Executive (Management).

ACTION

Include targets in Chief Officers' annual appraisals.

PROGRESS REPORT

Action completed.

17 RECOMMENDATION

The Assistant Chief Executive (Management) to provide guidance to departments in relation to wording for inclusion in person specifications referring to absence levels.

ACTION

Implemented in September 2005.

PROGRESS REPORT

Action completed.

18 RECOMMENDATION

Departments to review their current working arrangements, particularly shift working and the length of shifts.

ACTION

Ongoing.

PROGRESS REPORT

Departments continue to review the working arrangements of their employees.