

# Staffing Committee

**Dorset County Council**



Date of Meeting	26 November 2018
Officer	Service Director for Organisational Development
<b>Subject of Report</b>	<b>Management of Attendance 2018/19 – Quarter 2 (July 2018 to September 2018)</b>
Executive Summary	<p>Sickness absence has fallen to its lowest level in two years, during a time when employees are balancing the need for service continuity with transition to the new unitary authorities.</p> <p>Sickness absence has reduced by 0.54 days per FTE this quarter and now stands at 7.70 days per FTE. Both mental health and musculoskeletal related absence have fallen this quarter. The most significant reductions are reported in Economy and Environment (0.8 days), Adults (0.7 days) and Finance (0.7 days). Children’s Services has seen a rise of 0.3 days but has seen a fall in sickness over the medium term. Organisational Development sickness has risen this quarter of 0.5 days to 7.0 days per FTE.</p> <p>The report also provides an update against progress on the recent sickness absence audit report.</p>
Impact Assessment:	<p>Equalities Impact Assessment:</p> <p>No separate EqIA has been conducted / is required, although the Council’s policy on the management of attendance is itself subject to EqIA considerations.</p> <hr/> <p>Use of Evidence:</p> <p>The report is wholly evidence-based. Sickness targets have been established on a common basis applicable to all categories and groups of staff.</p>

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	<p>Budget:</p> <p>There are no direct cost implications arising from this report.</p>
	<p>Risk Assessment:</p> <p>No specific decision is requested in the relation to this report. The associated risk is low.</p>
	<p>Other Implications:</p> <p>Not applicable.</p>
Recommendation	Staffing Committee is asked to note the sustained progress on reducing sickness absence with DCC.
Reason for Recommendation	To provide a focus for the effective management of attendance within the Council.
Appendices	Appendix: DCC Management Dashboard as 1.10.18
Background Papers	None
Officer Contact	Name: Paul Loach, HR Business Partner Tel: 01305 225189 Email: paul.loach@dorsettcc.gov.uk

## Management of Attendance 2018/19 – Quarter 2 – July to September 2018

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report considers Quarter 2 sickness data (July to September 2018), and refers to the Council's quarterly and annual sickness data trends.

### 2. DCC sickness absence: a yearly perspective

**Table 1: Sickness absence in DCC for the last 24 months**

Date	DCC (excluding schools) Average days lost per full time equivalent (FTE)
September 2016	9.53 *
December 2016	9.55 *
March 2017	8.35
June 2017	8.44
September 2017	8.53
December 2017	7.95
March 2018	8.25
June 2018	8.24
September 2018	7.70

Note: where indicated \*, the data report parameters included sickness data from leavers. From March 2017, sickness reports exclude leaver's sickness absence

- 2.1 Sickness absence for Q2 (July to September 2018) is at its lowest rate for over 2 years, at 7.70 days per FTE per year. This is among the lowest employee sickness absence figures we have on record.
- 2.2 This quarter has seen a reduction of 0.54 sickness days from Q1, and a fall of 0.83 sickness days from 12 months ago, i.e. September 2017.
- 2.3 It does, perhaps, feel counter-intuitive that – at a time of such significant change – staff sickness has fallen so markedly. One potentially partial explanation, in theory, could be that sickness is being under-reported. There is no evidence for this, anecdotally or otherwise, at

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the time of writing, but HR will continue to pay close attention to these patterns and related issues.

### 3. Ill-health retirements and dismissals

3.1 For the twelve month period ending Q2 2018/19, the Council dismissed 16 employees due to medical incapability plus 1 ill health retirement. This compares with 14 medical incapability dismissals and 2 ill health retirements for the previous twelve month period ending Q1 2018/19. For each individual directorate:

- Adult and Community Services dismissed 1 employees due to medical incapability, no ill-health retirements.
- Children's Services dismissed 2 employees due to medical incapability, 1 ill-health retirements.
- Economy and Environment dismissed 4 employees due to medical incapability, no ill-health retirements.
- Chief Executives dismissed 2 employees due to medical incapability, no ill-health retirements.
- Dorset Waste Partnership (DWP) dismissed 7 employees due to medical incapability, no ill-health retirements.

### 4. Table 2: Reasons for sickness absence: (Q2: July 2018 to September 2018) All DCC (excl. Tricuro and Schools)

This report is used to track sickness absence trends and instigate preventative interventions.

Sickness Reason	Pro Rata Days Lost Q2	Sickness Cost Q2 £	% Days Lost Q2 by sickness reason	% Days Lost - previous quarter	% Change since last quarter
ANXIETY/DEPRESSION	907	89,053	14.5%	17.0%	-2.5%
CANCERS/TUMOURS	641	57,699	10.2%	9.6%	0.6%
CARDIOVASCULAR	108	6,901	1.7%	2.4%	-0.7%
CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME	13	806	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%
DIGESTIVE SYSTEM	835	68,592	13.3%	11.0%	2.3%
EAR,NOSE, THROAT	386	31,714	6.2%	7.6%	-1.4%
ENDOCRINE/GLANDULAR	29	1,789	0.5%	1.3%	-0.8%
INFECTIOUS DISEASES	55	4,527	0.9%	0.6%	0.3%
MISCELLANEOUS	45	3,405	0.7%	0.3%	0.4%
NECK/BACK PROBLEMS	406	39,262	6.5%	3.8%	2.7%
NERVOUS SYSTEM	250	23,456	4.0%	2.9%	1.1%
OTHER MENTAL HEALTH	140	11,504	2.2%	1.3%	0.9%
OTHER MUSCLOSKELETAL	860	63,270	13.7%	13.9%	-0.2%
REPRODUCTIVE AND URI	313	28,697	5.0%	3.6%	1.4%
RESPIRATORY	287	25,822	4.6%	5.6%	-1.0%
RHEUMATISM/ARTHRITIS	8	244	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%
RSI/UPPER LIMB DISORDER	101	9,812	1.6%	0.2%	1.4%
SKIN RELATED	124	10,490	2.0%	0.5%	1.5%
STRAINS/SPRAINS	74	4,571	1.2%	1.8%	-0.6%
STRESS	686	69,631	10.9%	16.4%	-5.5%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>6,266</b>	<b>551,245</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	

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- 4.1 Mental Health related absence has reduced from 34.7% of all absences in Q1, to 27.6% of all absences in Q2.
- 4.2 Other than minor variations, the sickness reasons for Q2 are similar to Q1 (though less in number and cost).
- 4.3 The cost of absence in Q2 is £551,245 (Q1 costs were £579,278).
- 4.4 The number of sickness days absence in Q2 is 6,266 (Q1 absence days were 6,460 days).

### 5. Mental Health-related sickness

**Table 3: Mental Health-related sickness October 2017 - September 2018**

Directorate	Non-Work Related		Work Related		TOTAL	
	Pro Rata Days Lost	Sum of Sickness Cost £	Pro Rata Days Lost	Sum of Sickness Cost £	TOTAL Pro Rata Days Lost	TOTAL Sickness Cost £
Adult & Community Services	1,086	121,320	155	12,562	1,241	133,882
Children's Services	1,934	199,260	767	86,254	2,700	285,513
Dorset Waste Partnership	519	38,398	29	2,074	548	40,472
Environment & Economy	1,980	173,769	450	45,820	2,430	219,590
Finance & Procurement	160	10,589	89	6,216	249	16,804
Organisational Development	165	19,400	39	5,884	204	25,284
Public Health	85	7,623	6	679	91	8,302
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>5,928</b>	<b>570,360</b>	<b>1,535</b>	<b>159,488</b>	<b>7,463</b>	<b>729,848</b>

- 5.1 Employees can record their mental health related sickness as either work-related or not work-related.
- 5.2 In overall terms, around a quarter of all absences caused by mental health conditions are recorded as work-related, though this varies by Directorate.
- 5.3 DCC adopts the use of the Health & Safety Executive's Stress risk assessment tool to understand the causes of work-related stress and agree interventions. Examples of interventions could include changes to job design, changes to working relationships or the earlier identification of signs of stress to enable remedial action to be taken.

### 6. Musculoskeletal absence

Table 5: Musculoskeletal causes of sickness (October 2017 to September 2018 v July 2017 to June 2018)

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Directorate	Pro Rata Days Lost (Oct 17 to Sept 18)	Sickness Cost (Oct 17 to Sept 18) £	Previous results (Pro -rata days lost July 17 to June 18)	Previous results (Sickness Costs July 17 to June 18)
Adult & Community Services	815	68,469	807	62,133
Children's Services	1,215	113,507	1,303	120,732
Dorset Waste Partnership	2,138	144,703	2,363	157,841
Environment & Economy	1,586	113,703	1,628	113,487
Finance & Procurement	53	4,253	104	8,046
Organisational Development	51	4,556	46	4,167
Programme	1	86	0	0
Public Health	74	10,984	52	10,184
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>5,933</b>	<b>460,262</b>	<b>6,303</b>	<b>476,590</b>

- 6.1 Musculoskeletal absence includes neck, back, repetitive strain injury and strains and sprains.
- 6.2 The latest data shows a further drop in musculoskeletal absence of 370 days / £16,228 in the last reporting period. This continues a trend of reducing musculoskeletal absence (16/17 to 17/18), where days lost have reduced by 12% and sickness cost by 21%.
- 6.3 DCC continues to provide employees with extensive moving and handling training, health and safety risk assessments and Occupational Health assessments to prevent and reduce absences. The continuing reduction in volumes of this category of sickness absence suggests this provision is effective in producing the desired results.

### 7. An update on the sickness audit actions

- 7.1 A sickness management audit carried out in April 2018 concluded "reasonable assurance" in relation to DCC's management of sickness absence. Several improvements were identified by the organisation and auditors, and a subsequent action plan was agreed. A summary of the audit recommendations is set out below, together with the actions taken for each one.

Ref:	Audit Recommendations (Summary)	Action Taken
1.1 (a)	Promote (communicate) the new DES sickness suite to managers.	Completed.  A 'Top tips for effective sickness management' document was created and communicated to all staff and managers, highlighting how to correctly report sickness absence in DES (i.e. recording a long-term absence as one sickness entry, not multiple sickness entries). Also highlighted was the importance of completing return-to-work interviews and the promotion of the new DES sickness software suite.
1.2 (a)	Timely notification of absence for Passenger Assistants is put in place (Environment and Economy)	Completed.  A new recording and monitoring system has been put in place which enables a daily recording of absence, allowing early action to be taken.

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1.2 (b)	Update all Passenger overdue Passenger Assistant absence.	Completed. All PA absence is up to date and the new sickness monitoring system acts as an ongoing checking mechanism.
1.3(a)	Promote (communicate) the new DES sickness suite to managers.	Completed. See action taken 1.1 (a)
2.1 (a)	Review mechanism for RTW interview completion rates	Completed. Reviewed at Directorate leadership teams on a monthly basis.
2.1(b)	Review mediated access teams to ensure RTW and absence notifications are recorded properly (i.e. one absence, not multiple individuals absences)	Completed - no issues found
2.1 (c)	RTW completion process put in place for Passenger Assistants and Grounds workers (EE)	Partial completion. The new sickness monitoring system in Dorset Travel will prompt Compliance Officers to complete RTW interviews. We will be monitoring progress and will roll this out to Grounds workers in the coming weeks.
2.1(d)	RTW completion process put in place for Residential care home staff in permanency team (Childrens)	Completed. The permanency team has a RTW rate of 90% at the time of writing.
2.1(e)	Provide guidance on recording long term absence (as one absence not multiple).	Completed. See action taken 1.1 (a)
2.1(f)	Agency workers understand the RTW and sickness absence procedures	Completed. See action taken 1.1 (a)

### 8. Comment / Observation

Sickness absence has fallen to its lowest level in two years, and among the lowest figures we have on record, during a time when employees are balancing the need for service continuity with transition to the new unitary authorities.

It should be noted that sickness absence often fluctuates between quarters, but there is a clear trend of falling sickness absence over a longer period of time at organisational level. The focus on wellbeing and mental health within DCC remains strong and visible, which is most important during this time of organisational transition.

**Jonathan Mair**  
**Service Director for Organisational Development**  
 November 2018  
**APPENDIX**

## Management of Attendance 2018/19 – Quarter 2 – July to September 2018

### High Level DCC Dashboard as at 1.10.18

Organisation	Manager	RTW Interviews	RTW Interviews %	Sickness Days Lost	Headcount FTE	% of Working Days Lost per FTE 1.10.18 *	Sickness Days Lost Per FTE 1.10.18	Sickness Days Lost Per FTE 1.7.18	Direction of Travel
Dorset County Council	Mrs Deborah Ward	4910	80%	24,629	3,197.0	3.4%	7.7	8.0	↓
Adult & Community Services	<Vacant Position>	1017	89%	4,164	611.9	3.0%	6.8	7.5	↓
Adult Care	Mr Martin Elliott	571	89%	2,344	366.6	2.8%	6.4	6.9	↓
Commissioning, Partnership & Quality	Mr Paul Leivers	378	90%	1,343	198.8	3.0%	6.8	6.7	↑
Learning Disability/Mental Health	Mr Harry Capron	68	81%	478	46.6	4.5%	10.3	15.8	↓
Children's Services	<Vacant Position>	1234	80%	6,085	796.2	3.4%	7.6	7.3	↑
Care and Protection	Mr Kevin Peers	529	80%	2,860	321.5	3.9%	8.9	8.0	↑
Commissioning & Partnerships	Miss Claire Shiels	350	79%	1,585	206.9	3.4%	7.7	6.5	↑
Schools & Learning Service	Mr Andrew Reid	317	85%	1,354	229.1	2.6%	5.9	7.0	↓
Dorset Waste Partnership	Ms Karyn Punchard	674	92%	3,807	409.3	4.1%	9.3	9.3	↑
DWP Finance and Commercial	Mr Paul Ackrill	23	85%	201	12.8	6.9%	15.7	8.4	↑
DWP Operations	Mr Michael Moon	585	91%	3,398	360.1	4.1%	9.4	9.7	↓
DWP Strategy	Mrs Gemma Clinton	65	100%	188	34.4	2.4%	5.5	5.1	↑
Environment & Economy	Mr Michael Harries	1269	65%	8,071	977.5	3.6%	8.3	9.1	↓
Corporate Development	Mrs Karen Andrews	75	89%	244	53.4	2.0%	4.6	4.6	↓
Dorset Highways	Mr Andrew Martin	390	67%	1,928	265.9	3.2%	7.3	10.3	↓
Economy&Environment	Mr Matthew Piles	486	53%	4,359	437.9	4.4%	10.0	9.8	↑
ICT and Customer Services	Mr Richard Pascoe	318	89%	1,540	218.2	3.1%	7.1	7.3	↓
Finance & Procurement	Mr Richard Bates	361	87%	1,208	190.4	2.8%	6.4	7.1	↓
Estate & Assets	Mr Peter Scarlett	71	82%	172	32.3	2.3%	5.3	5.4	↓
Financial Services	Mr William Mcmanus	192	86%	825	115.9	3.1%	7.1	8.4	↓
Organisational Development	Mr Jonathan Mair	308	94%	1,000	143.2	3.1%	7.0	6.5	↑
Democratic Services	Mr Lee Gallagher	10	71%	91	10.7	3.7%	8.5	6.9	↑
Governance & Assurance Services	Mr Mark Taylor	16	100%	47	6.0	3.5%	7.9	6.3	↑
HR Operations	Mr Christopher Matthews	175	97%	328	60.8	2.4%	5.4	4.7	↑
HR Specialist Services	Mr Carl Wilcox	34	92%	87	29.2	1.3%	3.0	5.6	↓
Legal Services	Miss Grace Evans	73	94%	446	34.6	5.7%	12.9	10.8	↑
Public Health	Doctor David Phillips	41	68%	272	58.9	2.0%	4.6	4.3	↑

\* % of working days lost = 365 - 137 non working days (104 weeknds, 25 days leave, 8 days Public Holidays) = 228 working days