

By: Amanda Beer – Corporate Director Human Resources

To: Personnel Committee

Date: 18 May 2011

Subject: Health Well-Being & Attendance – Progress Report

Classification: **Unrestricted**

SUMMARY: This report summarises the activity involved in and impact of KCC's Health Well-Being and Attendance (HWA) initiative

1) **BACKGROUND**

In 2006 Human Resources initiated a 4 year action plan aimed primarily at improving the attendance of KCC staff, joining employee relations, health and safety and well-being activity to drive the initiative. Implementation of the plan has produced a significant and sustained improvement in KCC attendance (from circa 11 days /fte to below 8 days). The development and implementation of the Health Well-Being and Attendance (HWA) initiative and the on-going support provided by HR has resulted in a cultural shift. Managers have embraced the direction and support presented by HR well and are handling health issues that affect work and attendance with robustness and pragmatism.

2) **COSTS**

The improvement described has come about without significant financial investment in new products, aimed at improving attendance, of which there are many. Instead, by reframing and enforcing standards already in place, sharpening our monitoring and directing resources appropriately, HR has supported improved the management of performance in this area. There has, however, been significant investment from HR, Health & Safety and Occupational teams advising managers and identifying ways in which existing resources can be used more effectively to support health and well-being in the workforce.

There were some limited development costs in terms of system changes and, on occasion, release or engagement of HR professionals to deliver specific elements of support to the initiative. However, overall the achievement has come about with minimal additional financial investment.

As part of the review, the potential for reducing the cost of sickness by restructuring sickness benefit was considered. However, it was felt by Chief Officer Group at the time not to be appropriate. It should therefore be noted

that the achievement in reducing sickness absence to date has been achieved without cutting sickness benefit, although this remains an option.

3) SUMMARY OF APPROACH

The plan focussed on improving attendance by reviewing systems, procedure, practice and support but also, and most significantly, by building managerial confidence. Managing attendance and health issues is part of performance management and is the responsibility of direct line managers who are accountable for all aspects of performance management.

Existing benefits and policies were reviewed to ensure our employment proposition remained fit for purpose and able to impact on some of the pressures people experience in balancing work and home which can affect attendance.

Since 2006 we have updated some of KCC's leave entitlements to recognise the needs of carers in the workplace. In most cases this was achieved without significantly increasing entitlements beyond the statutory position. KCC has also introduced facilities to enable better managed periods of absence such as carer leave, our flexible working options and shorter, more attractive career break scheme. Equally important, our well-being activities have focussed on proactive health management and the top reasons for absence including stress and mental health and musculoskeletal complaints.

The primary focus for improvement was staff not working in schools as it was identified early in the project that an impact on attendance by this group of staff would be more containable although specific pieces of work were undertaken for school based managers and staff.

The Health Well-Being & Attendance Action Plan detailed 4 key priorities required to achieve a sustained improvement in attendance, each with specific objectives:

HWA Priority 1 – Process

Build a process for attendance management that is clear, integrated, accurate and utilised fully by managers to manage health at work.

HWA Priority 2 – Entitlement

Review, investigation and reframe entitlements to achieve optimum attendance, contributing to better work-life balance and organisational aims.

HWA Priority 3 – Interventions

Develop the range of organisational interventions to increase productivity.

HWA Priority 4 - Communication

Develop strategy for raising and maintaining the profile of health, well-being and attendance.

4) PERFORMANCE SINCE 2006¹

Year	Days lost per FTE
2006/7	11.05
2007/8	11.35
2008/9	8.71
2009/10	8.56
2010/11	7.83

KCC has used the Chartered Institute of Personnel's annual absence survey as a broad brush benchmark to assess its goals and achievements in managing attendance in comparison to its own and other sectors.

The 2010 report, published in 2011 indicated that the overall average absence level across all sectors in 2010 was 7.7 days per employee with the Local Government average at 10.3 days per employee and Health at 10.3 days per employee.

KCC's current levels of sickness compare favourably with these statistics and there remains room for further improvement in some areas which is achievable simply by replicating what has already been achieved.

5) REFLECTIONS

The achievements that resulted from the HWA initiative have endured beyond the period of the action plan indicating the measures put in place have the potential to have a lasting effect on our sickness statistics. However, much of the support for managing attendance comes directly from HR presently and it is evident that most improvement has been achieved in those areas of the business where intervention from HR has been at its greatest.

¹ Figures for financial years 2006/7 – 2007/8 represent BVPIs. KCC's own PIs for remaining years replaced the staffing group for comparison

HR, through the HWA, has strengthened the structure, advice and support to manage attendance but KCC managers have risen to the challenge to achieve a sustained and significant reduction.

It should be noted that organisational change has a major impact on staff stress levels and, according to the IDeA², amongst the most common symptoms of stress during and after organisational change are sickness absence and poor performance. Additionally, levels of engagement, which can be a predictor of sickness,³ are likely to be impacted by periods of change if change is not managed well.

KCC managers have the potential to anticipate and mitigate against the effects of the current and enduring period of change by investing in managing performance and change well. HR has a significant role to play in supporting both of these areas of activity and the complex issue of engagement.

6) Personnel Committee is invited to note the approach to sickness absence and its outcomes.

**Nicola Lodemore
Employment Policy Manager
Ext 4418**

² IDeA, June 2010

³ Gallop, July 2010