

**NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL**

**AUDIT SUB-COMMITTEE**

**SICKNESS ABSENCE**

**1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT**

- 1.1 To inform the audit sub-committee of the continuing impact of the improvement plan for sickness absence in the council and directorate specific actions

**2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 2.1 In June 2011, the audit sub-committee was reassured that the risk to capacity from high levels of sickness absence had been reduced. This was as a result of the reduction in annual sickness to 9.01 days against a target of 9.25 days for 2011/12.
- 2.2 The audit sub-committee requested that an update be provided in January 2012. This report sets out the position in respect of sickness absence as at end November 2011.
- 2.3 As at November 2011 (the latest data available), all directorates are achieving their individual targets as detailed in the table below:

<b>Directorate</b>	<b>Apr- Nov actual</b>	<b>Apr-Nov target</b>
Adult Social Services	9.04	9.34
Corporate & Community	4.51	4.98
Children & Young People's Service	6.20	6.28
Finance	3.13	4.50
Infrastructure Services	4.91	5.78
Neighbourhood & Environmental	6.78	8.97

2.4 This has resulted in a position whereby the council figure for the period between April and November 2011 is 5.49 days against a target of 5.93 days. The impact of this is a reduction of just under half a day per employee, which represents enhanced employee capacity and contribution to the council's financial position.

2.5 The council is on target to achieve the annual target of 9.00 days for 2011/12. It is anticipated that the council will see a greater impact by the end of 2011/12, with a projected reduction of 0.67 days per employee. The table below sets out the projected year-end figures:

<b>Directorate</b>	<b>2011/12 Projected year end figure</b>	<b>2011/12 Target</b>
Adult Social Services	13.04	13.50
Corporate & Community	6.32	7.00
Children & Young People's Service	8.90	9.00
Finance	4.77	6.86
Infrastructure Services	4.91	8.43
Neighbourhood & Environmental	9.83	13.00
<b>North Lincolnshire Council</b>	<b>8.33</b>	<b>9.00</b>

2.6 It should be noted that the average number of days lost per employee within the public sector is 9.01 days (CIPD, 2011). Analysis of the reasons for sickness absence shows that the council mirrors trends throughout the public sector with the highest absences occurring in the categories of muscular skeletal, stomach and digestion, stress and depression. These areas are being targeted, both using the council's procedures, and action such as manual handling training to minimise injuries.

2.7 Completion of the council's sickness absence action plan has contributed significantly to this achievement through:

- The introduction of a revised sickness absence policy resulting in improvements in the way sickness absence is managed

- A refresher training programme on sickness absence management for approximately 800 employees with responsibility for managing absence
- Opportunities for earlier intervention in short and long term absence through reduction of trigger points. This is supported by the development of automated notifications to managers when an employee's absence triggers the long-term absence procedure.
- Introduction of individual service targets have helped focus attention on the need to reduce sickness absence with some Directors opting to set more ambitious targets within their services.
- The incorporation of supplementary performance indicators into management information has encouraged managers to be more accountable
- Focus on targets has enabled the council to project year-end figures and take remedial action where required
- Review of management information including trigger point reports has enhanced tools available to managers to monitor and manage absence
- Focus on sickness absence through a poster campaign and training has reinforced employee and manager responsibilities
- Enhanced awareness that a reduction of sickness absence reduces the risk of low productivity and capacity through days lost, leading to maintenance of high quality services

### **3 OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION**

- 3.1 The Sub-Committee is asked to again consider the actions being taken and determine whether they continue to have sufficient assurance that the risk has been reduced.

### **4. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)**

- 4.1 Sickness absence is costly to the council in terms of lost productivity and in some cases providing cover.

**5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS (STATUTORY, ENVIRONMENTAL, DIVERSITY, SECTION 17 - CRIME AND DISORDER, RISK AND OTHER)**

5.1 The council is aware of the need to comply with the Equalities Act when dealing with sickness absence.

**6. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION**

6.1 Employees, managers and trade unions were consulted as part of the reviews and their views were incorporated into the council's action plan.

**7. RECOMMENDATIONS**

7.1 That the Audit Sub-Committee notes the reduction in sickness absence and determines whether there is continuing assurance that the risk to capacity due to sickness absence has been reduced.

Assistant Director, Human Resources  
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**Background Papers used in the preparation of this report**

None