

SCRUTINY ABSENCE REPORT – AUGUST 2015

HR & OD

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to review levels of sickness absence across Plymouth City Council, with an emphasis on stress related absence and the interventions taken.

2. General Information

Employee absence is actively monitored and interventions are in place to support managers in the prevention of days lost due to sickness, with an emphasis on stress related absence. Council wide absence figures show that as of July 2015, all Directorates were below their Directorate target.

Council Wide Sickness (Excl Schools)

Year to 31st July 2015

Working Days Lost

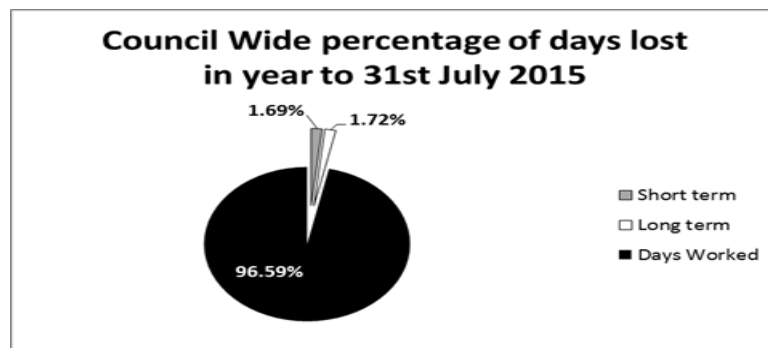
Directorate	Total Number of Days Lost	Average Absence Days per FTE	Directorate Target	Comparison of average to Directorate Target
Executive Office	358.40	5.31	7.00	-1.69 ●
Office of the Director of Public Health	616.30	5.98	8.50	-2.52 ●
People	8,404.54	8.66	9.45	-0.79 ●
Place	5,430.94	8.41	8.50	-0.09 ●
Transformation & Change	5,457.42	7.47	8.50	-1.03 ●
Council Wide Total	20,267.60	8.05	8.49	-0.44 ●

Note: FTE is Full Time Equivalent

Data is for staff retained in service as at 31 July 2015.

Targets vary by department to take into account different working environments and to ensure targets are realistic and achievable. Targets are reviewed regularly by Corporate Management Team.

The impact of sickness on available working days shows that during the last 12 months, we lost 3.41% of available working days attributed to sickness absence.



Note: Data takes account of available working days excluding standard annual leave (25 days).

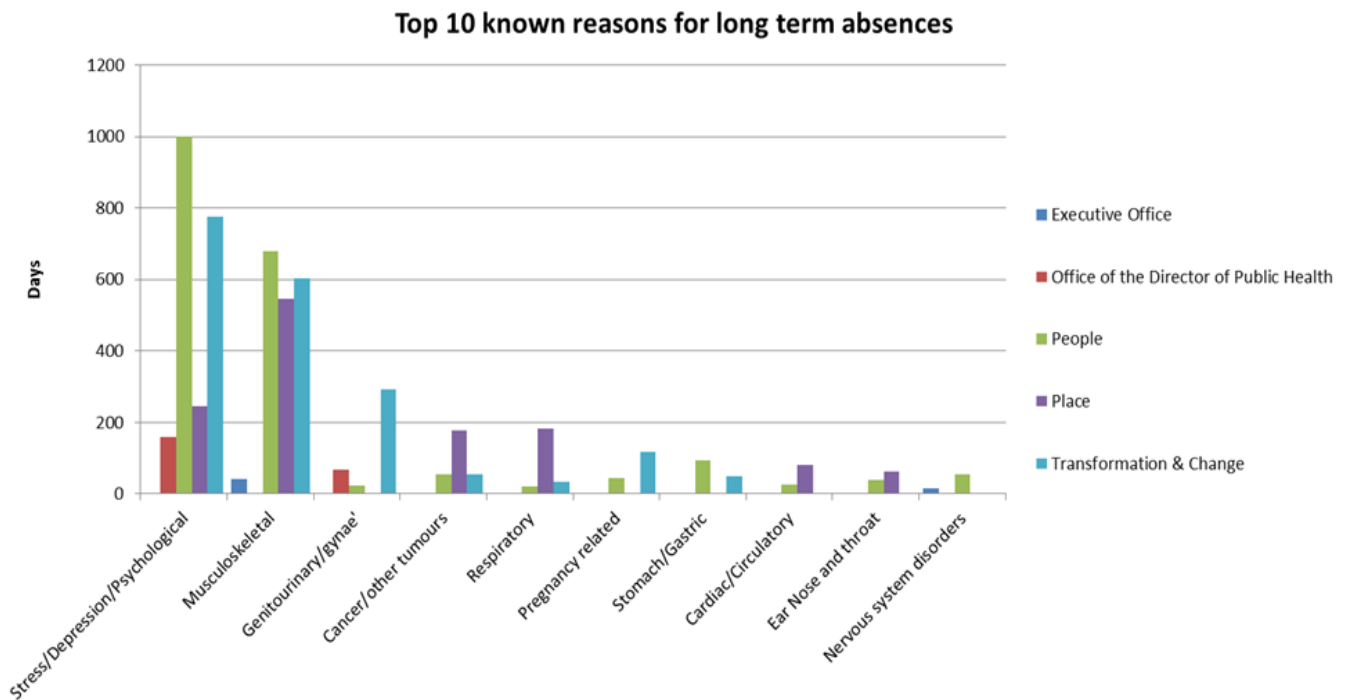
3. Sickness Levels (Rolling Year as of July 2015, excluding Schools)

- The overall Council target is an average of 8.49 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) days.
- The actual average FTE days lost to sickness is: 8.05 FTE days.

4. How Does Plymouth City Council Compare to Other councils?

The average days lost in public sector (Councils) for sickness absence is: 8.7 FTE¹, Plymouth City Council has set a target below the average and proactively manages employee wellbeing initiatives Council-wide.

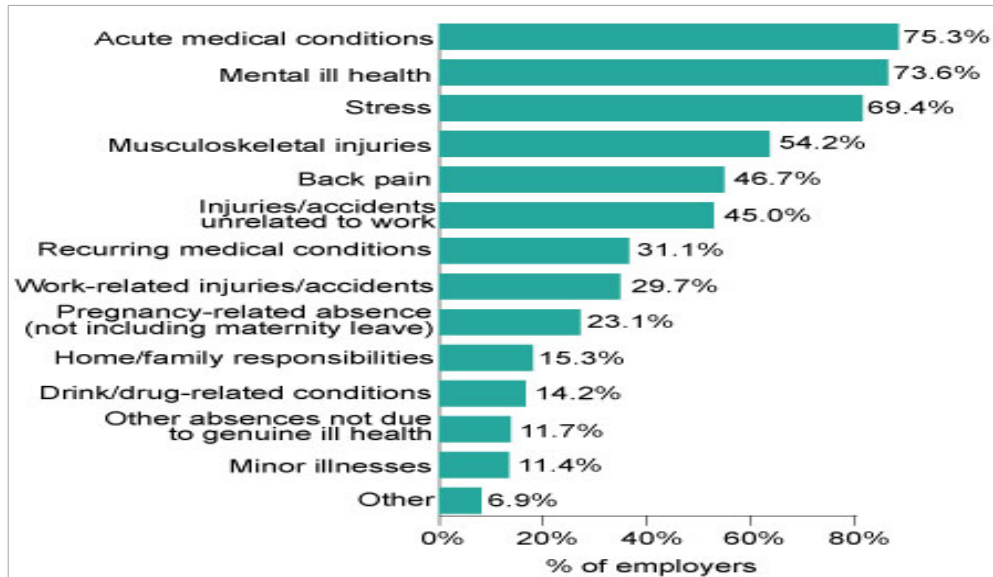
Reasons for sickness absence in Plymouth City Council



The leading cause of sickness was reported to be *stress, depression, psychological* followed by *musculoskeletal problems*. This is similar with general labour market data as evidenced in the table below.

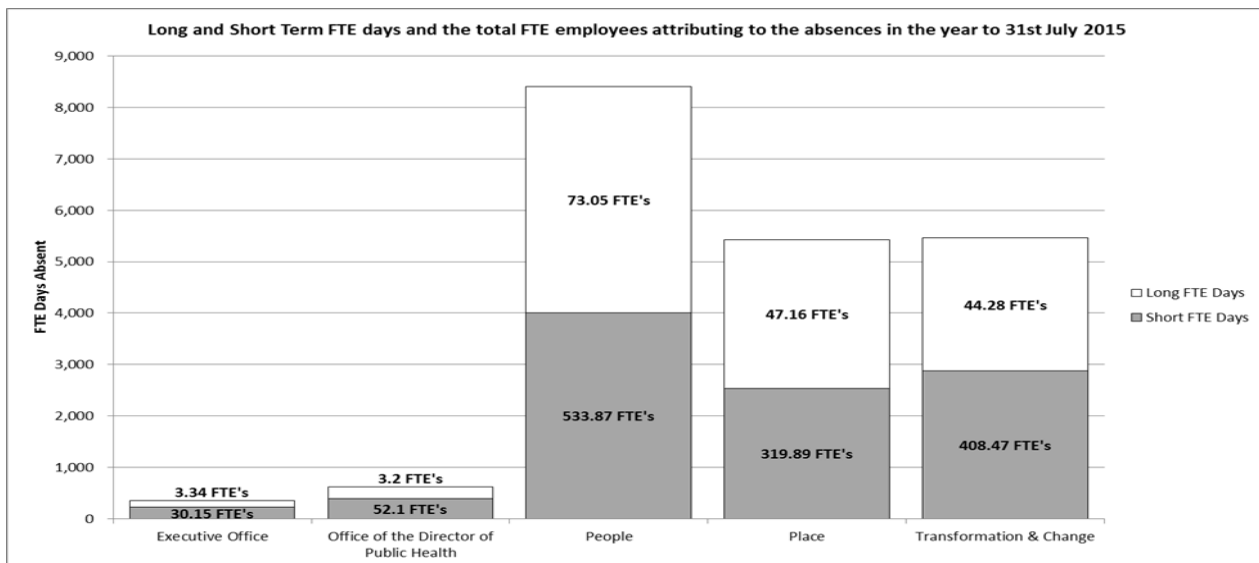
¹ LGA Workforce Survey 2014

Causes of Long Term Illness – UK 2014²



5. Short and long term absence in Plymouth City Council by Department

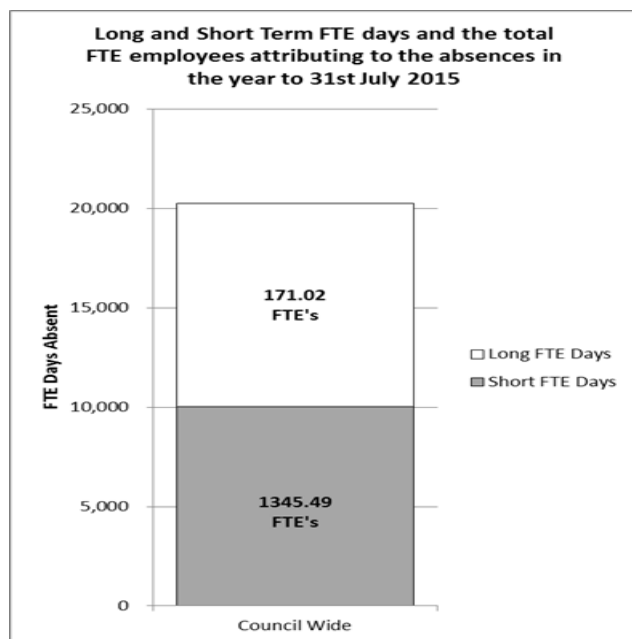
The chart below shows the number of employees grouped as full time equivalents (FTE's) who have had sickness absence in the rolling year, both long and short term.



Absences which are less than four weeks are classed as short term, absences greater than four weeks are long term.

² Xpert HR 2015

The chart below shows the council wide absences both long and short term, and proportion of FTE's (Full Time Equivalent) who have taken sickness absence in the rolling year.



You can see from the table that long term absences are attributed to significantly fewer employees (FTE's), and that a similar number of days are lost when compared to short term absence. Long term absences are serious conditions, usually requiring medical interventions and Occupational Health support. Short term absences are monitored by line management, who offer support, make reasonable adjustments and arrangements for Occupational Health support and advice where appropriate.

6. Approach to managing sickness absence in Plymouth City Council

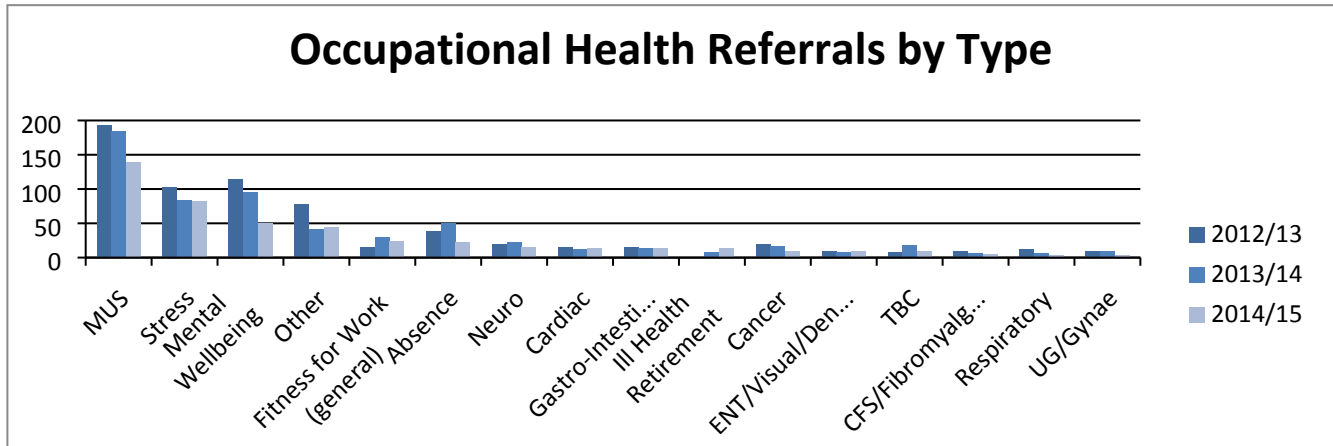
Plymouth City Council actively manages staff who are off work sick on a day to day basis through our Capability policy and procedures. This includes Return to Work meetings, and Wellbeing meetings (when sickness levels reach a trigger of either 5 days or more or 3 separate periods of absence). Sickness absence data is regularly reviewed by managers and by Assistant Directors every month. HR Advisors review the top 100 cases each month directly with the relevant line manager to ensure the appropriate action is being taken. For example, formal action under the Capability Policy was taken in 138 cases over the last 12 months.

Plymouth City Council also proactively supports the well-being of Plymouth City Council staff. We have multiple strategies in place to equip managers and supporting employees by;

Council employees have access to an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) which provides guidance on managing work and non-work related stressors through access to a 24/7 helpline and a signposting website as well as up to 6 free counselling sessions.

The Health Safety and Wellbeing Team have been raising awareness of the service and a total of 606 employees contacted the EAP service in 2014.

Plymouth City Council encourages the use of Occupational Health Services wherever relevant. A total of 462 referrals were made to Occupational Health in the 2014/15 year. You can also see from the data that managers are proactively referring employees to Occupational Health for stress and mental health support and advice.



Note: The 'other' category includes a wide range of referral types that are grouped together to avoid identifying individuals. 'TBC' is a code used by our Occupational Health for referrals that they have not yet classified.

It is difficult to identify whether stress related illness is work or non-work related due to the confidentiality offered to employees through available support services.

The Health, Safety and Wellbeing team have issued an assessment tool and guide on Managing Stress and Resilience in the workplace. This is to provide guidance to managers on the principles and processes of reducing stress related sickness absence. Managers across Plymouth City Council, supported by Health Safety and Wellbeing and HR Advisory team use the tool across teams, as well as individually with employees where required.

Where we identify particular teams or services with high levels of absence due to stress we work with the managers to put tailored measures in place. For example Customer Services has undergone significant change and service managers are proactively supporting employees to reduce the risk of increasing stress related absence by;

- Holding career transitions workshops for all managers followed by employees workshops from August 2015.
- Stress and Resilience assessments have been completed on the team and on individuals where required. The HR Advisory and Health Safety and Wellbeing Team are supporting manager's action planning following the assessments.
- Implementation of a new flexible working scheme called Timeback Credit Scheme has now been agreed and will be implemented in August 2015.

The Corporate Management Team has confirmed their commitment to implement a Workplace Wellbeing Charter. This is a nationally recognised accredited scheme which provides guidance on how to make the workplace a supportive and productive environment where employees can flourish. The Charter has a set of standards to embed best practice and a statement of intent which demonstrates our commitment to the health and wellbeing of employees.

The Workplace Wellbeing Charter Programme is considered a vital tool to support our transforming organisation. It will pull together existing good practice, define the gaps, and lay the groundwork for continuous improvement. Working alongside Public Health this will also focus on the four main causes of poor health – smoking, physical activity, health eating and alcohol/substance misuse. There is strong evidence to show that having a healthy workforce can reduce sickness absence, lowers staff turnover and boosts productivity.

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