

SICKNESS ABSENCE SURVEY RESULTS

Surveys were distributed to employees who were absent from work due to illness between April 2016 and February 2017. Different questions were asked dependent upon whether the employee had been absent long term or short term. The response rate was 42%.

Findings

Long Term

18 surveys were received from employees who were absent long term (21 working days or more pro rata). The directorate split was:

Customer and Digital – 10

Policy and Governance –1

Early Intervention and Support – 5

Business Development and Growth - 2

The following responses were received.

My manager and human resources visited me during my absence.

67% Strongly Agreed

28% Agreed

6% (1 respondent) Disagreed

I felt supported by my manager during my absence.

56% Strongly Agreed

44% Agreed.

I felt supported by human resources during my absence

33% Strongly Agreed

67% Agreed.

I was offered appropriate support e.g. counselling, physiotherapy

22% Strongly Agreed

78% Agreed.

I understand the Council's attendance policy.

56% Strongly Agreed

44% Agreed.

I feel that the attendance policy was applied to me fairly.

50% Strongly Agreed

50% Agreed.

I felt supported by my manager upon my return to work

89% Strongly Agreed

11% Agreed.

I felt supported by human resources upon my return to work

33% Strongly Agreed

61% Agreed

6% (1 respondent) disagreed

I feel that the workplace adjustments (such as a phased return) helped my return to work.

94% Strongly Agreed

6% Agreed.

Additional comments

6 additional comments were received:

4 employees described the process as “good” or “fair”.

1 employee felt that welfare visits were not a good use of officer time.

1 advised that they would have chosen a “not applicable” option for the question related to HR support.

Short Term

48 surveys were received from employees who were absent short term (20 working days or less pro rata).

The directorate split was:

Customer and Digital – 30

Policy and Governance – 4

Early Intervention and Support – 12

Business Development and Growth - 2

I felt supported by my manager during my absence and upon my return to work.

96% Strongly Agreed or Agreed.

4% Disagreed.

I felt supported by human resources during my absence and upon my return to work.

46% Strongly Agreed

31% Agreed

23% Disagreed

I was offered appropriate support (e.g. counselling, physiotherapy, workplace adaptations)

48% Strongly Agreed

29% Agreed

23% Disagreed

I understand the Council's attendance policy.

34% Strongly Agreed

63% Agreed

4% Disagreed

I feel that the attendance policy was applied to me fairly.

25% Strongly Agreed

71% Agreed

4% Disagreed.

Between April 2016 and February 2017 25 employees triggered an absence meeting. 3 were issued with warnings. None appealed.

6 respondents had triggered an attendance meeting due to their absence(s). 1 respondent was issued with a warning at this meeting.

My manager explained the reason for the absence meeting to me.

33% Strongly Agreed

67% Agreed

I felt supported during the meeting.

33% Strongly Agreed

50% Agreed

17% Disagreed

I thought that the outcome of the meeting was fair.

67% Strongly Agreed

17% Agreed

17% Disagreed

Additional comments

14 additional comments were received:

8 employees describe a positive experience with managers described as "supportive", "understanding", and "caring".

2 employees expressed dissatisfaction at being invited to an absence meeting.

1 employee felt that the absence policy was implemented in her service but not in other (none specified) services.

1 employee thought that planned post-operative recovery should not require the same level of manager contact.

2 employees stated that HR were not directly involved in their short term absence.

Analysis

In considering the negative responses:

2 employees did not feel supported in their return to work following a short term absence. 1 employee works in Customer and Digital and 1 in Early Intervention and Support.

11 employees did not feel supported by HR during their short term absence. 9 are from Customer and Digital, 1 from Early intervention and support, 1 from Policy and Governance.

11 employees were not offered appropriate support during a short term absence. 7 from Customer and Digital, 2 from Early Intervention and Support, 1 from Business Development and Growth, 1 from Policy and Governance.

2 employees did not understand the Council's attendance policy. Both employees were from Customer and Digital.

2 employees did not feel that the policy was applied to them fairly. 1 employee from Customer and Digital and 1 from Early Intervention and Support.

1 employee did not feel supported during their absence meeting, they are from Customer and Digital. This employee also did not think that the outcome of the meeting was fair. This employee was issued with a warning.

Conclusion

Employees across the Council understand the attendance policy and feel that the long term absence policy is applied fairly and consistently. They feel supported by management and HR both during and after their absence.

Employees who are absent short term are less likely to feel supported by HR, although this may be due to limited HR involvement as the process is manager led.

Not all employees are being offered interventions to support them through a short term absence. There may be more work to be done to ensure managers are aware of what can be offered. Conversely, it may be that the support the Council offers is not appropriate to some types of illness, for example viral illness.

The employee who was issued with a verbal warning was unhappy with the process and felt unsupported.

More employees in Customer and Digital responded negatively to questions around the short term absence policy; however this may be due to a higher number of absences and therefore greater number of returns for this directorate. There is no trend which proportionately identifies greater levels of dissatisfaction to any specific directorate. It is possible that should the survey be repeated, service level could be incorporated, however this may impact on response rate and the accuracy of responses.