Manchester City Council
Report for Information

Report to: Overview and Scrutiny Human Resources Subgroup - 25 January
                  2011

Subject: Managing Attendance (Real Time Absence Reporting)

Report of: Assistant Chief Executive (People)

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Recommendations

Members are asked to note the contents of the report.

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Wards Affected:

None

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Contact Officers:

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

None.

1.0   Purpose of the Report

1.1   To brief and update the Committee on the corporate approach to the recording of real time sickness absence data.

2.0   Background

2.1   Following the Diagnostic Solutions Pilot in Adult Services in 2010, it was recognised that service managers welcomed and benefited from on line access to real-time sickness absence data to support them in managing employee absence.

2.2   The current system for recording absence data relies on payroll deadlines and the submission of monthly absence returns to payroll by service managers. This results in delays in recording sickness absence data and also in the preparation of sickness absence performance reports. The Executive Member for Resources had asked the HR/OD Service to investigate the feasibility of implementing a system that would enable the Council to record real-time absence data and it was requested by the HR Sub Group of the Resources and Governance Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 5th October that an update be provided at their next meeting.

3.0   Real Time Absence Reporting and Recording

3.1   The Assistant Business Partner Neighbourhood Services was tasked with looking at the feasibility of a "real time" sickness reporting system that could be adopted across the Council. A small task group was subsequently formed and following consultation and discussions with the corporate Payroll Team, HR Business Support and ICT Teams, the following actions were agreed;

- A revised sickness absence reporting form to be developed. The form to be electronically accessible through any office desktop, or any location where managers can access City Council IT systems. The form design should be user friendly and capable of being electronically transmitted to Payroll for input to SAP

- Develop a revised SAP process that will enable the absence data transmitted to Payroll to be batch processed to speed up the input and performance reporting process

- Issue instructions and guidelines to Managers to submit "Fit Notes" and Return to Work Forms to Payroll immediately on receipt

- Issue instructions and guidelines to the Payroll Team to update SAP as soon as documents are received from managers

- The areas that participated in the Diagnostic Solutions Pilot within Adult Services should pilot the revised approach to absence reporting

4.0   Actions to Date

4.1   A revised draft absence reporting form has been designed and is currently being piloted in Learning Disability Networks, Homelessness and Reablement. The form has been designed to include drop down boxes to assist in completion of the minimum data required by Payroll to process the absence. The form is completed and submitted by managers to Payroll from any desktop location. When completed the form is automatically attached to an email which enables it to be confidentially and securely sent to a Payroll email box without further manual input. A copy of the transmitted form is automatically attached to the email and saved in the managers sent box so a permanent record is saved and available for future reference. This not only speeds up administration, but reduces the need for paper records.

4.2   Feedback from the Adult Services managers piloting the new reporting process indicates the revised procedure is successfully operating, easy to use, has speeded up the sickness recording process and enables line managers to access real time employee absence data at their fingertips, assisting them in implementing the Managing of Attendance Policy. Having this information readily available is beneficial in informing attendance monitoring reviews and supporting the organisation's focus on improving attendance and on promoting staff health and wellbeing.   Senior managers have commented that the revised procedure combined with a more focussed approach by line managers has led to significant reductions in employee absence have been achieved particularly within Neighbourhood Services and Adult Services where there has been a consistent downward trend resulting in a reduction of almost 2 days per employee over 12 months. The chart at Appendix 1 shows the progress in achieving reductions from November 2009 to October 2010.

4.3   The roll-out of the electronic form will be through the new intranet system using Microsoft Sharepoint. This will lead to standardisation, meaning the form can be updated corporately, if future changes are required.   A key benefit of using Microsoft Sharepoint is that the system enables the immediate compilation of data in relation to all staff reporting sick. The information is directly transferable into Microsoft Access and can be analysed. In practice, we will know how many staff are absent at any point in time and the reasons for their absence.

4.4   ICT are currently working on an absence interface process to capture the absence data from the transmitted forms enabling the information to be loaded directly into the SAP system without manual input. This will enable the Payroll Team to test their ability to cope with volume data before the revised reporting process is rolled out across the Council.

4.5   Managers will be required to forward, Medical Certificates and Return to work forms to the Payroll Team as soon as received. However, they will also be able to send scanned images of documents, as an alternative to internal mail and will not be required to submit monthly absence returns.

4.6   The revised procedures outlined above will speed up the reporting process and enable managers to operate independently of payroll processes and

timeframes and bring about a convergence of both absence recording and
absence management into one process.   How To" guidelines are currently
being prepared and managers will be briefed on the revised reporting
processes in January.

5.0   Management Information

5.1   Key to enabling managers to effectively manage absence is to provide regular
consistent baseline data. A SAP module called Managers Desktop has now
been rolled out across the Council. MDT provides an easily accessible source
of information. Once the data is input by Payroll and or through the new
absence interface, it will facilitate the provision of instantly available (real time
information) to managers and senior managers in Directorates to view and
report on. This information should be available to all service managers by 31
March 2011.

5.2   Work is currently underway with ICT to provide monthly absence performance
statistics based on the real time data, enabling managers to monitor
performance against targets. This information will be delivered directly
through email to all managers responsible for employees and the
management of their absence. This is a further step change that will support
managers by enabling them to receive and review information to assist them
in managing attendance. Once this process has been tested and proved it will
present the opportunity to directly deliver a comprehensive range of other
reports to managers. It is anticipated that this reporting facility will also be
available from April 2011.

6.0   Next Steps

6.1   As outlined significant progress has been made in moving this project forward.
The next steps will be to ensure the revised form is implemented, the payroll
interface developed and tested and a line managers brief designed to be
accompanied by a "how to" guide.

6.2   A roll out plan will be prepared and discussed with Directorates and Strategic
Business Partners with a view to a phased implementation of the revised
reporting procedure across the Council from March 2011.

Appendix 1

Average Days lost

	Nov-09	Dec-09	Jan-10	Feb-10	Mar-10	Apr-10	May-10	Jun-10	Jul-10	Aug-10	Sep-10	Oct-10		Variance
MCC Excluding schools	13.64	13.39	13.28	13.31	13.56	13.35	13.35	13.34	12.99	12.93	12.87	12.50		-1.14