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Report of the Head of the Service Centre

Governance and Audit Committee – 14 September 2021

Absence Management Audit Report 20/21

Purpose:	To provide an update on the Absence Management audit report for the above period
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For Information	

Internal Audit on Absence Management – Update September 2021

1.   Introduction

1.1   As a result of the first internal audit on Absence Management carried out in 2020, an assurance level of moderate was given.

1.2   An action plan was developed to address the issues identified and appropriate implementation steps put in place. It was envisaged the first edition of the Service Centre Newsletter would incorporate the majority of the recommendations relating to communications, however, due to work pressure, this has been placed on hold but alternative solutions have been put in place which are detailed below.

1.3   This action plan identified the following HR actions (High Risk) and MR actions (Medium Risk)

   2.1.4 & 2.1.5 (HR) *"There should be a drive to ensure that all 'S' grade managers undertake the online Management of Absence training as soon as possible to ensure correct and consistent practice across the organisation".*

Update: The Service Centre has included reminders with links and signposting relating to training on the monthly emails sent when issuing the reports, therefore Managers will receive 12 reminders per year.

Communication has also been issued to all HoS, 3rd & 4th tier managers outlining the requirement for all staff to complete the mandatory training.

Following the implementation of Oracle Fusion, there will be a requirement for all Managers with Absence Management responsibilities to undertake training on the new system. Once the initial training has been completed the system will automatically generate reminders as to when the refresher training needs to be undertaken, these reminders will be sent to the Manager and their Line Manager. The system will also provide the capability to generate reports identifying any gaps.

2.3.3 (MR) *"All 'S' Grade Managers should be reminded on an annual basis of the importance of conducting and recording Return to Work interviews in Oracle and in a timely fashion"*

Update: All relevant information is held on Staffnet and also in the Policy and associated procedure documents. Monthly reports are also issued detailing any outstanding actions relating to Return to Work Interviews.

Responsibility for undertaking the reviews and recording remains with those 'S' Grade Managers at all times and their own line managers.

The Service Centre has included reminders relating to this on the monthly emails sent when issuing the reports, therefore Managers will receive 12 reminders per year.

Communication has also been issued to all HoS, 3rd & 4th tier managers outlining the importance of updating Oracle EBS in a timely manner.

As part of the Oracle Fusion implementation all Managers will be trained in the new system and reminded of the importance of updating the system in a timely manner.

2.11.1 (MR) *"All Managers should be reminded on an annual basis that in all cases of Long Term Absence, the employee should be referred to Occupational Health"*

Update: All relevant information is held on Staffnet and also in the Policy and associated procedures.

As part of the Oracle Fusion implementation, all Managers will be trained in the new system and reminded of the Policy relating to Occupational Health referrals.

Responsibility for Occupational Health referrals remains with Managers at all times and their own line managers.

The Service Centre has included reminders relating to this on the monthly emails sent when issuing the reports, therefore Managers will receive 12 reminders per year.

2.11.3 (MR) *"Details of all Long Term sickness interviews and associated welfare meetings should be entered onto Oracle by Managers as soon as is practicable"*

Update: All relevant information is held on Staffnet and also in the Policy and associated procedures. Monthly reports are also issued detailing outstanding sickness cases.

Communication has also been issued to all HoS, 3rd & 4th tier managers outlining the importance of updating Oracle EBS in a timely manner.

The Service Centre has also included reminders relating to this on the monthly emails sent when issuing the reports, therefore Managers will receive 12 reminders per year.

Responsibility for recording sickness interviews and welfare meetings remains with Managers at all times and their own line managers.

As part of the Oracle Fusion implementation all Managers will be trained in the new system and reminded of the importance of updating the system in a timely manner.

2.24 & 2.12.2 (MR) *"Consideration should be given to having a discussion with the provider of the Interflex system to provide reports, highlighting where instances of 'unauthorised absence' remain unaddressed"*

Update: Not considered a cost effective solution, as the majority of 'unauthorised absences' relate to missed clock ins and not sickness.

Managers are able to check the Interflex system to check and monitor the status/calendars of their staff.

When Oracle Fusion is implemented managers will have access to Real Time absence dashboards and the Service Centre will continue to monitor and issue statistical reports relating to sickness (sent out across the authority on a monthly basis).

Additional Work and Progress

HR&OD have secured additional resource to support a number of areas across the Authority in Social Services (Domiciliary Care, Residential Care) the Place Directorate (Waste parks & Cleansing, Highways & Transportation), Education (Catering & Cleaning) and work with Managers providing advice and guidance on individual cases and solutions to reduce sickness.

The Service Centre continues to promote the reports and dashboard currently available to managers, also providing training and support on all aspects of Oracle system requirements.

The Service Centre has included reminders relating to the recommendations ie training and updating the system etc on the monthly emails sent when issuing the reports, therefore Managers will receive 12 reminders per year.

It is envisaged, following the implementation of Oracle Fusion and changes made eg making fields mandatory, enhancements to self-service etc, that the overall recording, actioning and reporting will give the Authority a far improved picture of Absence Management across all areas and provide Managers with real time information dashboards and specific notifications relating to outstanding actions.

The implementation of the Learning Module will also enable the authority to monitor and ensure compliance on mandatory course attendance and provide users with reminders to complete training.

2. Integrated Assessment Implications

2.1 The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage
- Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
- Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2005 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.

Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language

2.2 There are no implications in relation to this report.

3. Financial Implications

3.1 There are no financial implications other than those set out in the body of the report.

4. Legal Implications

4.1 There are no legal implications other than those set out in the body of the report.

Background Papers: None.

Appendices:

Appendix A - Sickness Management Compliance Trend Analysis
Appendix B – Integrated Impact Assessment Form.