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| <b>Change Management<br/>Committee</b> | <b>Tuesday, 15 January<br/>2019</b> | <b>Matter for<br/>Information</b> |
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**Report Title:** **Absence Management (Q3 2017/18 v Q3 2018/19)**

**Report Author(s):** **Karen Pollard (Head of People & Performance)**

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| <b>Purpose of Report:</b>  | The purpose of this report is to give the overall levels of sickness absence levels at the Council and compares them per quarter in 2017/18 to 2018/19.   |
| <b>Report Summary:</b>   | The report gives a breakdown of short-term and long-term sickness absence per employees up to quarter three for both years. It sets out information about how sickness absence is managed to reduce the numbers of days lost to the Council. It also sets out plans to reduce sickness absence in the future. It includes how we support employees during sickness absence. |
| <b>Recommendation(s):</b>  | <b>That the contents of the report be noted.</b>  |
| <b>Responsible Strategic Director, Head of Service and Officer Contact(s):</b> | Anne Court (Chief Executive / Head of Paid Service)<br>(0116) 257 257 2602<br><a href="mailto:anne.court1@oadby-wigston.gov.uk">anne.court1@oadby-wigston.gov.uk</a><br><br>Karen Pollard (Head of People & Performance)<br>(0116) 257 2727<br><a href="mailto:karen.pollard@oadby-wigston.gov.uk">karen.pollard@oadby-wigston.gov.uk</a>                                   |
| <b>Corporate Priorities:</b>   | Effective Service Provision (CP2)<br>Wellbeing for All (CP5)  |
| <b>Vision and Values:</b>  | "A Strong Borough Together" (Vision)<br>Accountability (V1)<br>Respect (V2)<br>Teamwork (V3)<br>Innovation (V4)<br>Customer Focus (V5)  |
| <b>Report Implications:-</b>   |   |
| Legal:   | There are no implications directly arising from this report.  |
| Financial:   | There are no implications directly arising from this report.  |
| Corporate Risk Management:   | Reputation Damage (CR4)<br>Organisational/Transformational Change (CR8)<br>Other corporate risk(s).   |
| Equalities and Equalities Assessment (EA):                                     | There are no implications directly arising from this report.<br>EA not applicable.  |
| Human Rights:  | There are no implications arising from this report.   |

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| Health and Safety:                    | There are no implications arising from this report. |
| <b>Statutory Officers' Comments:-</b> |   |
| Head of Paid Service:                 | The report is satisfactory.                         |
| Chief Finance Officer:                | The report is satisfactory.                         |
| Monitoring Officer:                   | The report is satisfactory.                         |
| <b>Consultees:</b>                    | None  |
| <b>Background Papers:</b>             | None.   |
| <b>Appendices:</b>                    | None.   |

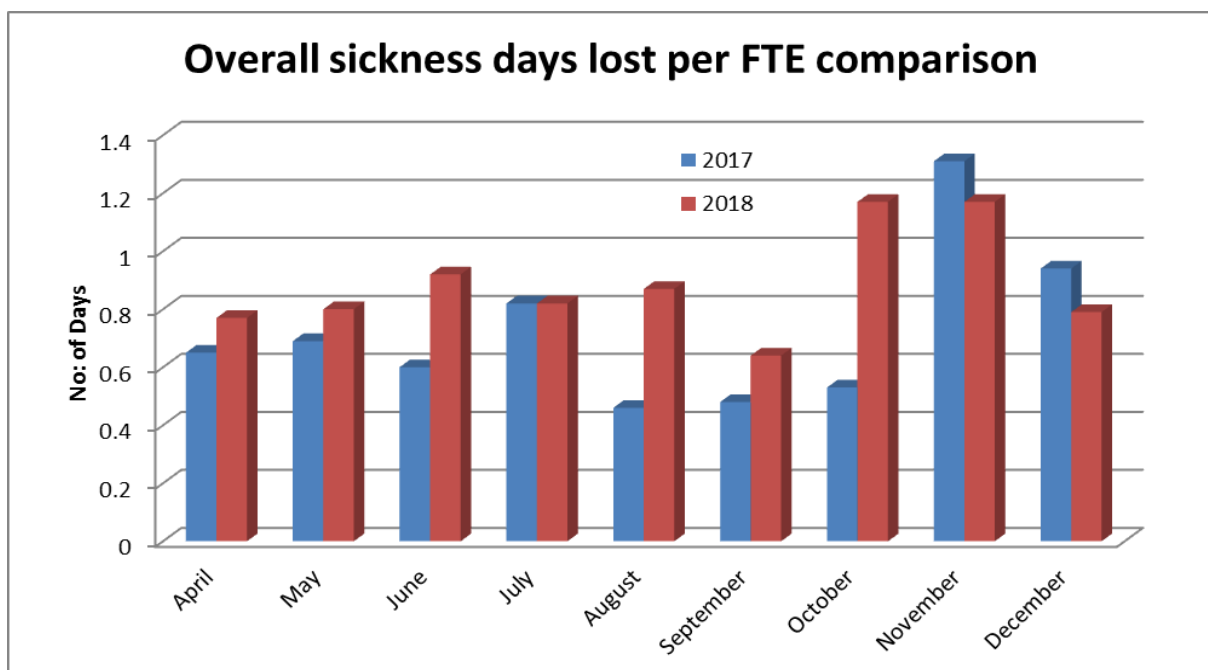
## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report gives details about the overall position of sickness absence levels at the end of quarter 3 for 2018/19. It also reports on the first 3 quarters of 2017/18 and 2018/19 so that a comparison can be made between the two years.
- 1.2 In 2018/19, a key performance indicator of 8 days per person was introduced to measure short term sickness absence. This is reported on a quarterly basis to the Policy, Finance and Development Committee.
- 1.3 Short term absence is classed as sickness absence which is less than 4 weeks in duration. Absence that is longer than 4 weeks is considered to be long term sickness absence and is recorded and managed in a different way. The overall sickness absence is reported as one combined figure as days lost to the Council per full time equivalent employee.

## 2. Statistics Setting Out Numbers of Days Combining Short and Long Term Sickness

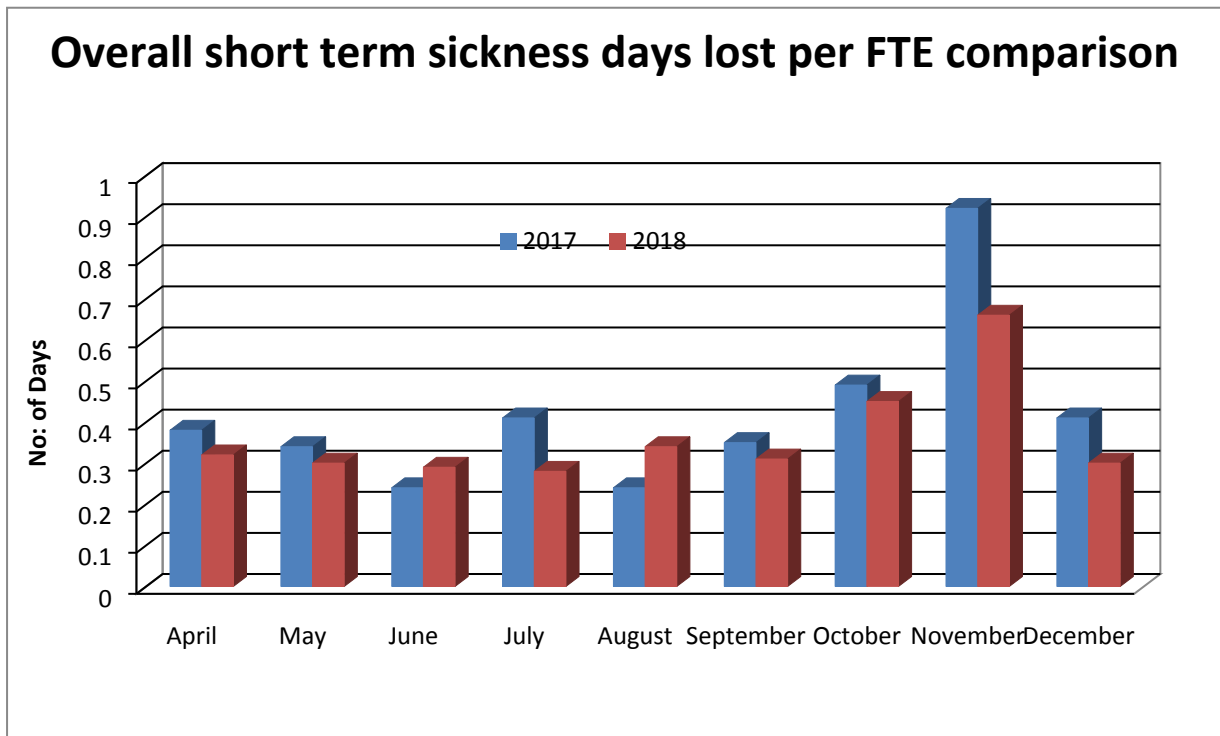
### Comparison up to Quarter 3 from 2017/18 and 2018/19

#### Overall Sickness



2.1 In the third quarter of 2017/18 the overall days lost to sickness absence for both short term and long term sickness combined was 6.48 days per full time employee (FTE). In the same quarter for 2018/19 this has risen to 7.95 days per FTE. The reason for this increase is the higher number of long term sickness cases so far this year. In the 2017/18 year there were 2.75 days lost per FTE and in the same period in 2018/19 there were 4.7 days lost per FTE. The figures for the end of year report to the end of March 2019 will see a reduction in absence levels due to a number of cases being resolved under the Council’s policies. The figures for the end of year report in March 2019 should see a reduction in the sickness levels to reflect this.

**Short Term Sickness**

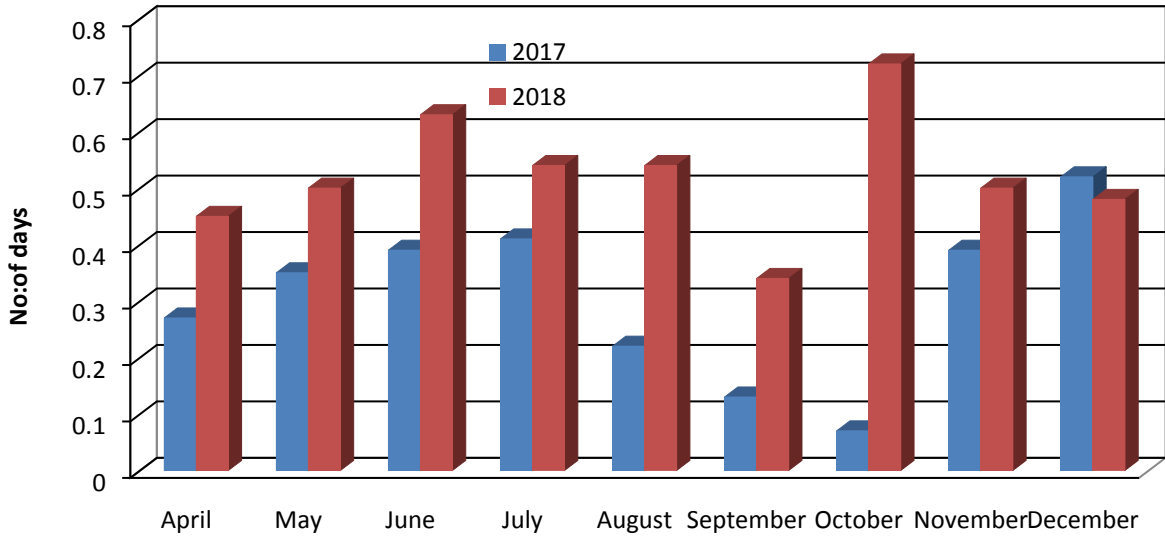


2.2 Short term sickness absence shows a reduction from 2017/18 to 2018/19 which is a measure of success for the Council. In 2018/19 up to quarter 3, 3.25 days per FTE were lost compared to 4.2 days per FTE for 2017/18. There are no patterns with short term sickness; there are wide reasons from colds to sickness bugs. The figure for the private sector employer’s sickness absence is consistently lower than the public sector and is on average 4 days per person. It is believed this is linked to less favourable sick pay provision in the private sector.

**Long Term Sickness**

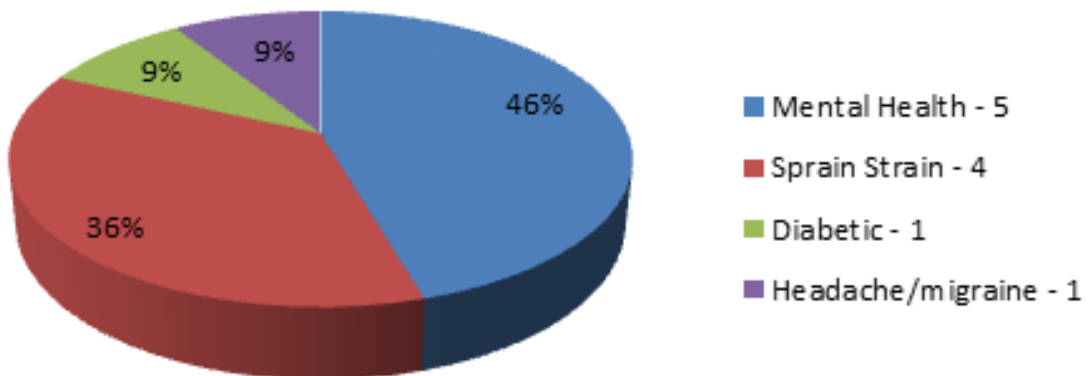
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### Overall long term sickness days lost per FTE comparison



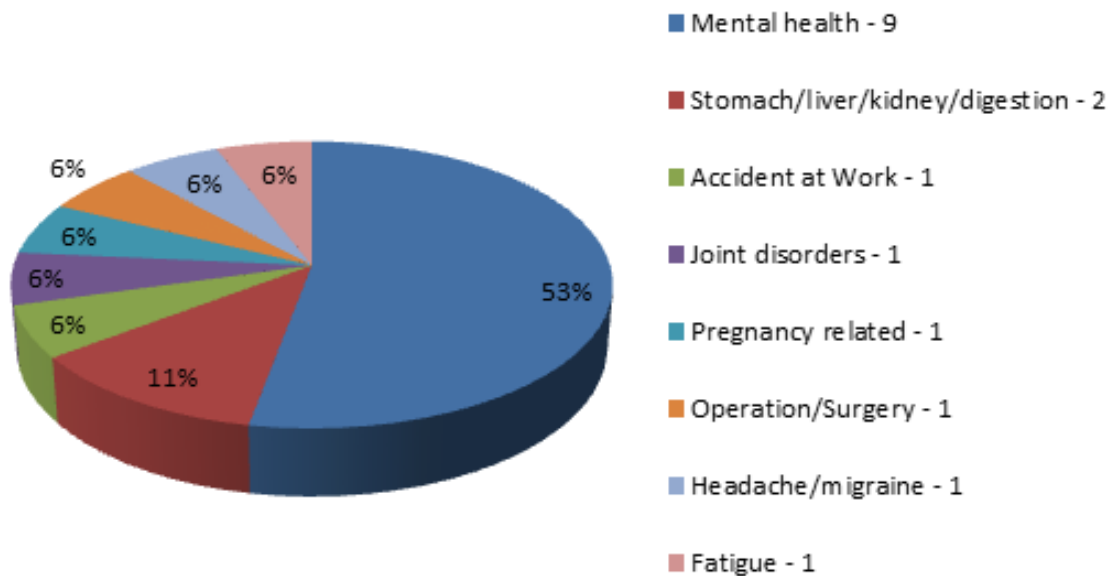
2.3 The number of day’s absences for long term sickness, which is for sickness over 4 weeks, has risen from 3.49 days lost per FTE in 2017/18 to 4.7 days lost per FTE in 2018/19. The Council’s policy on sick pay is in based on the length of service. In the first year of service employees receive one month’s full pay and two months half pay. After 5 years’ service, sick pay rises to 6 months’ full pay and 6 months’ half pay.

### Causes of long term sick April-December 2017



(Continued overleaf)

## Causes of long term sick April-December 2018



2.4 The comparison between long term sickness shows how varied each year can be. We are working with the trade unions to ensure that employee's interests and that of the Council are taken onto account. At present, the majority of mental health issues are not work related and are more to do with personal stress.

### 3. Action Currently Being Taken to Reduce Sickness Levels

- 3.1 A New Sickness Absence Management Policy was introduced in February 2017. This Policy gave managers the authority to set targets for employees to meet when they reach more than 3 occasions in a 12 month period of short term sickness. The Policy has 3 stages for improving attendance and can lead to dismissal if poor attendance persists. The introduction of the policy was accompanied by a training course for all those who have the responsibility for managing staff. This gave confidence to managers to deal with sickness absence and ensured consistency when applying the Policy across the Council. The Policy is attributed to the reduction in short term sickness absence.
- 3.2 Return to work interviews are completed for all sickness absences when employees return to work. This process is attributed to a reduction in sickness absence as a way of reducing occasional or frequent absences. It is also a way of ensuring that the employee is well enough to carry out the full duties of the role. Records of these meetings are kept on personal files.
- 3.3 In cases of long term illness, which is longer than 4 weeks, a phased return can be used to ease the employee back to work and can offer support or reasonable adjustments. This can be in relation to any illness where there may be a risk of the employee having a relapse and not being in a position of returning on a full time basis.
- 3.4 Since 2017, the Council has delivered 3 Health at Work days for staff. These will be held twice a year going forward. The Health Days involve checks for staff such as blood pressure, cholesterol checks, diabetes and height and weight. These checks encourage a healthier lifestyle and improve attendance at work.

- 3.5 There are staff benefits available such as free leisure passes, monthly massages and free annual flu jabs. An interest free cycle to work scheme is available to all staff. There is a free Employee Assistance Package which has a help line which is available on a 24 hours a day, 7 days a week basis to give advice on a range of issues. There are also 6 face to face counselling sessions free for all staff to help manage stressful situations.
- 3.6 There is a Stress Policy in place to help with work related stress. This involves contacting staff within a week of sickness absence to see what can be done to help them back to work. A referral to our Occupational Health Advisor will be made at the time if appropriate.
- 3.7 When employees are on sickness absence for more than 4 weeks (which is not work related stress) e.g. operations, the line will keep in touch with the employee in the early stages of absence. The line manager and a human resources advisor visit the employee at the 4 week stage. A referral to Occupational Health is made if required. A visit is then made every 4 weeks until the employee returns. Arrangements are made to encourage a return to work.
- 3.8 We also have courses available on the Council's e-learning package 'Learning Pool' to reduce sickness to support staff with life challenges which could have a knock on effect and cause sickness absence.

#### **4. Plans to Reduce Sickness Levels Further**

- 4.1 There are two members of the Human Resources Team who have trained to be Mental Health First Aiders. The role is classed alongside first aiders and will be available from 1 January 2019.
- 4.2 From 1 February 2019, the Human Resources Team will be able to offer work place coaching which is to improve performance and productivity.
- 4.3 The Council will be delivering in house training which will be open to all staff on How to Manage Stress, and Recognising the signs and symptoms of Mental Health.
- 4.4 Team Leaders will be offered Leadership and Management training so that they can manage their teams while taking into account the best practice. By managing teams using the best techniques, this will reduce the stress in the workplace.