

Report to: Governance Committee

Date: 12 July 2016

By: Chief Operating Officer

Title: Revised Attendance Management Procedure

Purpose of report: To advise the Governance Committee on the revised Attendance Management Procedure

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Governance Committee is recommended to approve the revised Attendance Management Procedure as set out in Appendix 1.

1. Background

1.1 East Sussex County Council spends in the region of £5.1m in associated salary costs due to sickness absence, and an additional £1.9m in sickness-related agency costs, on an annual basis.

1.2 As part of the Council Plan we are committed to ensuring we are making best use of our resources. In line with this, we have a Council Plan target of 9.24 working days lost per FTE (Full Time Equivalent) employee due to sickness absence in non-school services.

1.3 In support of this, we have a range of mechanisms in place to both monitor and manage sickness absence levels, but our key tool to support managers is the Attendance Management Procedure itself.

2. Supporting Information

Revised Attendance Management Procedure and Toolkit

2.1 A formal Attendance Management procedure was first introduced in 2000 in response to the need to have in place a more formal and consistent approach to managing sickness absence across the Council. This was replaced in 2007 with a new policy which was then further updated and replaced with the current Attendance Management Policy in 2011. The 2011 policy sought to strike a more proportionate balance between the need to robustly manage attendance, whilst recognising that some staff are genuinely unwell.

2.2 Although this policy has served us well over the last five years, it is a very long and technical document, running to some 44 pages. Managers, staff and trade unions have all told us that they find it difficult to navigate and implement effectively.

2.3 In response to this feedback, a revised Attendance Management procedure has been developed; the process has been simplified and shortened, and the document reduced to 26 pages in length.

2.4 In developing the new procedure, account has been taken of our own experiences as well as best practice and experience from other public sector and private organisations.

2.5 The revised procedure and toolkit has been shared and discussed with Trade Unions, who have been positive in their response. A number of comments were made by the Unions and these have been incorporated where appropriate. In addition, it has also been reviewed by the Human Resources Management Board on two occasions and their comments and recommendations have also been incorporated.

2.7 In order to support managers and staff with the new procedure, a range of online resources have been developed including an e-learning module, short videos and interactive content, for example, hints and tips on running Return to Work discussions etc. These resources will be hosted on the new learning management system.

Attendance Management Procedure and Supporting Documentation

2.8 The revised procedure is attached at Appendix 1.

2.9 A summary of the proposed changes in the new procedure is attached at Appendix 2. This includes feedback from the Trade Unions and management's response in relation to this.

3. Conclusions and Recommendations

3.1 There is an organisational need for a compact and simplified, robust Attendance Management procedure in order to address and reduce absence levels. The new procedure and supported online training resources will provide an increased level of readily accessible support for managers.

3.3 Set against the above background, the Governance Committee is recommended to approve the revised Attendance Management procedure.

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