

JOINT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 18th JULY 2019

INFORMATION BULLETIN – STAFF TURNOVER AND WELFARE

Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee received Information Bulletin BOS18/26 at its meeting on 21st January 2019 and following discussion of the information, requested another update in six months.

This bulletin provides the update to Committee and shows the information that has been presented before for previous years plus the figures for the whole of 2018/19, so that the Committee can see the comparative information.

TURNOVER

Turnover figures for Babergh and Mid Suffolk are recorded on a monthly rolling annual basis. The numbers in the table below are based on an average of the monthly figures over the period shown. The table demonstrates that the turnover for the year to March 2019 has reduced compared with the previous year.

Turnover Period	BDC / MSDC	Public Sector	Private Sector
April 2016 – March 2017	10.5%	19.4%	22.5%
April 2017 – March 2018	22.5%	Not available*	Not available*
April 2018 – March 2019	16.1%	Not available*	Not available*

Note * The comparable figures that were used for 2016/17 are no longer published nationally.

SICKNESS ABSENCE and STRESS RELATED ABSENCE

The table below shows the number of days sickness absence compared to the total number of employees and to the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) staff.

Sickness	Sickness days lost	Number of employees	Sickness days lost per employee	Full Time Equivalent (FTE)	Sickness days lost per FTE
April 2016 – March 2017	3,920	543	7.22	480	8.17
April 2017 - March 2018	4,470	531	8.42	463	9.65
April 2018 – March 2019	4,097	537	7.63	476	8.61

The latest national comparators for sickness absence relate to 2017/18. The Local Government Workforce Survey for 2017/18 (published by the Local Government Association) quotes an absence figure of 8.1 days per FTE for shire districts in England.

It should be noted that the rolling year to May 2019 is showing a figure of 6.96 per employee, which is continuing the downward trend on sickness. Significant work has been carried out by managers and HR to ensure that absence is managed, and appropriate support given. In particular, a new Absence Management Policy and associated Toolkit were published in April 2019, with training provided to all managers in advance of the new policy going live.

Top 3 Reasons for Absence

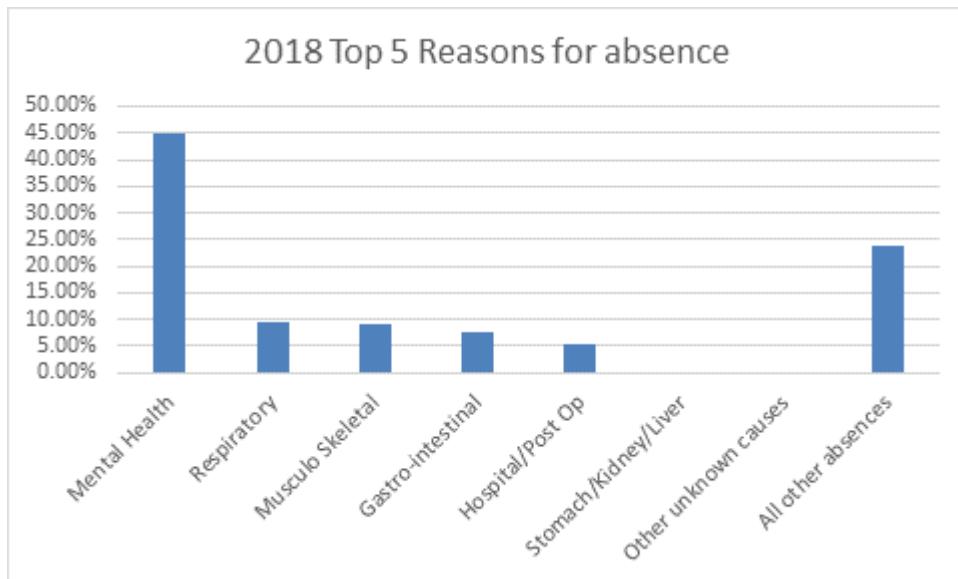
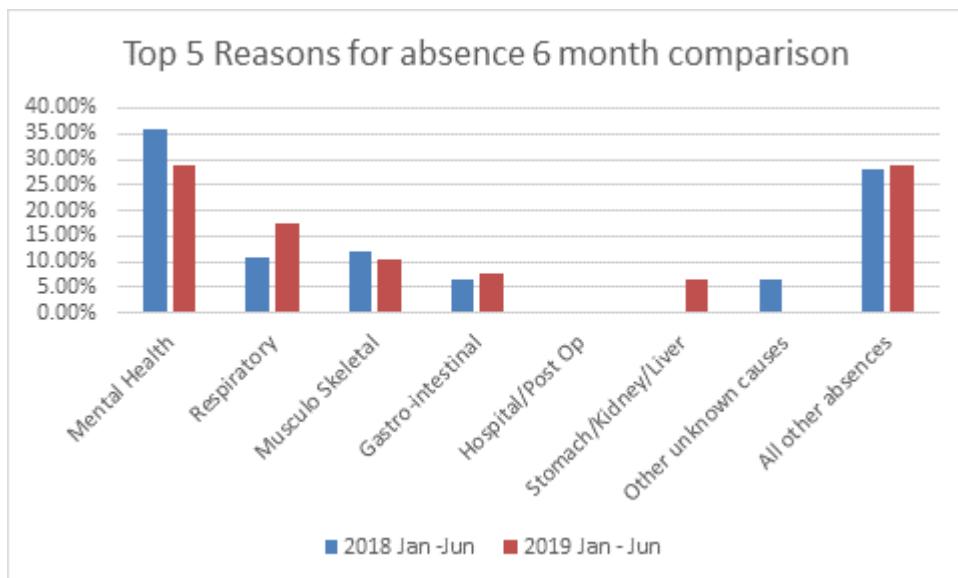
The table below shows the three main reasons for sickness absence for the years from 2015/16 to 2018/19.

	1	2	3
2015/16	Virus/Infection 537 days	Other 468 days	Stress/Anxiety/ Depression 375 days
2016/17	Headache/ Neurological 643 days	Stress/Anxiety/ Depression 598 days	Other 315 days
2017/18	Stress/Anxiety/ Depression 933 days	Musculoskeletal 824 days	Virus/Infection 439 days
2018/19	Stress/Anxiety/ Depression 1,931 days	Gastro-Intestinal 329 days	Musculoskeletal 300 days

The following two tables have been produced with the most recent data available at the current time. These show the comparisons between 2018 and 2019 of the percentage of days lost and reasons for absence.

It is difficult to make a 2-year comparison with the data available, so the first 6 months of 2018 have been compared with the first 6 months of 2019 in the first table below. This shows a significant drop in absence due to mental health whilst respiratory issues have increased.

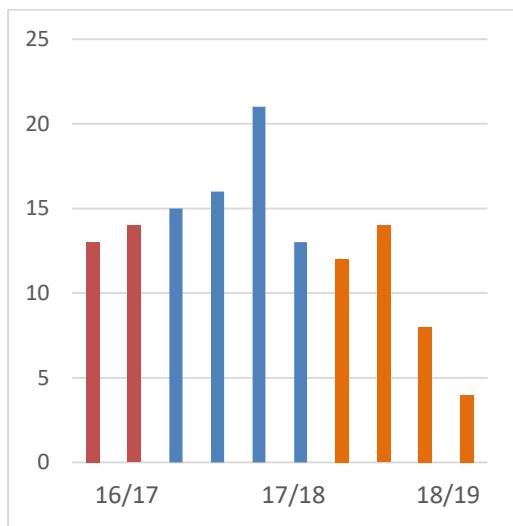
The second table shows the reasons for sickness absence during 2018.



Long Term Sickness Absence

The following chart shows the number of employees on long term sickness absence (absent for 4 or more weeks) between October 2016 and March 2019 per quarter. Between January and March 2019, the reason for the long-term sickness absence

for the 4 employees was Mental Health. The table below shows that since the second quarter of 2018 there has been a general downward trend in long-term absences.



Mental Health Sickness Absence

Mental health related sickness absence data for Babergh and Mid Suffolk over the past three years shows that we have seen a significant increase in this type of illness. In terms of comparative data, the LGA currently reports that depression, anxiety, mental health and fatigue account for an average of 29% of absences. The equivalent figure for Babergh and Mid Suffolk in 2018/19 is 45%. However, in the first six months of this calendar year the numbers have dropped significantly to 28% of absences. Since October 2018 there has been a downward trajectory in the number of days absence, which has been a result of actively managing mental health cases and resolving some very long-standing issues.

Employee Assistance Programme

The Councils have an arrangement with an external counselling organisation under which staff can access services if they wish to have a confidential conversation outside of the employee/employer relationships. The table below shows the level and reason for the calls that have been taken each calendar year for 2016-2018, for the first quarter of this year (January-March 2019) and the last financial year from April 2018 to March 2019.

Categories of counselling calls

Counselling Calls	1 Jan - 31 Dec 2016	1 Jan - 31 Dec 2017	1 Jan – 31 Dec 2018	Jan - Mar 2019	Apr 2018 - Mar 2019
Work Related Stress	11	21	7	0	0
Separation/Divorce	10	0	1	5	6
Anxiety	5	23	11	3	14
Service Enquiry	5	6	1	0	1
Disciplinary	2	9	0	0	0
Depression	1	15	22	0	22
Partner	1	6	2	0	2
Individual Event	1	0	0	0	0
Impact of Mental Health of Another	0	3	2	6	8
Bereavement	0	2	6	0	2
Other Diagnosed Mental Health Disorder	0	0	8	0	2
Childcare	0	0	3	2	5
Employment	0	0	3	0	3
Motoring	0	0	0	0	0
Low Mood	0	0	6	5	11
Lack of Support	0	0	1	0	1
Demands	0	0	1	0	1
Property	0	0	0	0	0
Civil	0	0	0	2	2
Family	0	0	0	1	1
TOTAL	35	85	74	24	81

The table above is consistent with the Reasons for Absence figures. In the financial year 2018/19 of the 81 counselling calls received 57 related to mental health. The table above shows a rise in the impact of the mental health of another on our employees. Whilst depression, anxiety and low mood remain the highest reasons for calling, depression has not been the cause of any calls in the first quarter of this year and low mood has seen the largest increase in calls. Further reports through 2019 may show whether this is seasonal. It is of note that in the 2018/19 financial year there were no requests for counselling under the work-related stress heading.

Mental Health and Wellbeing Actions

In addition to the actions that were being undertaken to address the increase in mental health-related absences, which were outlined to Committee in the previous Information Bulletin (BOS18/26), the new Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy and

Toolkit have been launched and all managers have received training on these. Awareness of the toolkit has also been raised through our internal communications. In March, when the Mental Health and Wellbeing Toolkit was first made available, there were 184 page views on the intranet, April 108 and May 62 showing the level of interest and willingness to learn more about managing this area of ill health.

As part of Mental Health Awareness week (w/c 13 May 2019) we ran a ‘campaign through our Working Together employee Newsletter and posters from 10-17 May to promote the support available for mental health within the councils. This included promoting tools within the Mental Health and Wellbeing Toolkit, support and resources available via our Employee Assistance Programme and our internal Mental Health First Aiders. In May 32 out of 62 of the page views of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Toolkit on the intranet took place between 10-20 May.

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July 2019