



<b>Service area</b>	<b>HR</b>
<b>Date of assessment</b>	<b>December 2010</b>
<b>Name of strategy/policy/function/service to be assessed</b>	<b>Sickness Absence Policy</b>
<b>Is this a new or existing strategy/policy/function/service?</b>	<b>Update of existing policy and procedures</b>
<b>Name of manager responsible for strategy/policy/function/service</b>	<b>Sarah Caddell</b>
<b>Names of people conducting the assessment</b>	<b>Kiran Hans &amp; Louise Sboui</b>
<b>Step 1 – Description of strategy/policy/function/service</b>	
Describe the aims; objectives and purpose of the policy (include how it fits in to wider aims or strategic objectives).	<p>The renewed policy provides guidance to ensure that sickness absence is handled promptly, sensitively and consistently by managers throughout the Council. It also provides guidance to employees on sickness absence and the potential consequences for their employment.</p> <p>The policy aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply a consistent and fair approach across the Council for managing sickness absence</li> <li>• Provide employees and managers with guidelines defining acceptable and unacceptable attendance and procedures to deal with unacceptable and/or high levels of sickness absence</li> <li>• Promote the health, safety and well-being of all employees</li> <li>• Identify ways to monitor levels of sickness absence for all</li> </ul>



	<p>employees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a mechanism to support employees who are sick and unable to attend work</li> <li>• Provide managers with the tools to actively manage employees during their period of absence and return to work</li> <li>• Provide guidance on the need for reasonable adjustments, redeployment, rehabilitation and re-training to support an employee to return to work.</li> <li>• Inform staff of the consequences of unacceptable levels of sickness absence</li> </ul> <p>The Policy fits into two objectives within the Council’s corporate plan (Growing Success): To learn and develop: To be an employer people want to work for -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• encouraging employees to behave the way we expect;</li> <li>• ensuring appropriate levels of health and occupational health;</li> <li>• maintaining appropriate systems of remuneration and employment terms and conditions;</li> </ul> <p>To strengthen our commitment and capacity to achieve equality, diversity and inclusion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring our employment practices provide equality of opportunity and do not discriminate against any individual</li> </ul>
<p>Are there any (existing) equality objectives of the policy</p>	<p>The policy provides all managers with clear guidelines on how to manage sickness absence fairly, it demonstrates to employees who are absent that they will be treated equitably, and to the rest of the workforce that their colleague’s absence is being managed in a consistent manner.</p>



	<p>The Council is also committed to providing a supportive environment for employees affected by ill-health and will endeavour to identify and resolve, where possible, any underlying work related causes of absence.</p>
<p>Who is intended to benefit from the policy and in what way?</p>	<p>The policy covers all staff who are employed on Huntingdonshire District Council terms and conditions of employment. Employee sickness absence has a direct impact on the Council's ability to deliver services effectively; this includes replacement costs to cover the absence as well as increased workload for colleagues; which can lead to tensions, anxieties and low morale. An effective sickness absence procedure will therefore benefit service users.</p> <p>The Council also provides a range of support services through line managers, HR, Occupational Health, confidential First Contact service and an external professional counselling service is also available to employees who need to discuss work related or personal problems with professional counsellors.</p>
<p>What are the intended outcomes of this policy?</p>	<p>See aims above. The policy is intended to help the Council to realise its objectives of reducing sickness absence.</p>
<p><b>Step 2 – Data</b></p>	

<p>What baseline <b>quantitative data (statistics)</b> do you have about the strategy/policy/function/service relating to equalities groups (e.g. monitoring data on proportions of service users compared to proportions in the population), relevant to this policy?</p>	<p>Monitoring data is not currently available however sickness absence will be monitored from 2011 onwards</p>
<p>What <b>qualitative data (opinions etc)</b> do you have on different groups (e.g. comments from previous consumer satisfaction surveys/consultation, feedback exercises, or evidence from other authorities undertaking similar work), relevant to this strategy/policy/function/service?</p>	<p>Managers had commented that sickness absence arrangements needed to be clearer; in addition to this, comments have been made through the AIM (All Employees Matter – staff suggestion scheme) about the need for more defined guidelines for managing sickness absence.</p> <p>The Employee Liaison Advisory Group, Unison, Heads of Service and Activity Managers were consulted as part of refreshing the Policy. Amendments have been made to the Policy as a result of this consultation.</p> <p>Specific equalities groups could be more likely to experience bullying or harassment at work, which is recognised as a key cause of stress. Therefore they may have higher sickness absence levels.</p>
<p><b>Step 3 – Policy impact</b></p>	
<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact on <b>different racial groups</b>?</p> <p>What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>The policy is applied consistently to all staff regardless of race – however, monitoring is not currently carried out.</p> <p>Employees can use the grievance procedure if they feel they have been discriminated against and the policy mitigates the risk of an adverse impact as its aim is to ensure that sickness</p>



	<p>absence is implemented consistently across the Council.</p>
<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact on <b>gender, including transgender people</b>?</p> <p>What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>The policy is applied consistently to all staff regardless of gender - however, monitoring is not currently carried out. Employees can use the grievance procedure if they feel they have been discriminated against and the policy mitigates the risk of an adverse impact as its aim is to ensure that sickness absence is implemented consistently across the Council.</p> <p>To a certain extent the policy will have a positive impact as it takes into account pregnancy and any sickness absences resulting from this do not count towards any sickness triggers. With regards to time off and gender reassignment - a transsexual person should not be treated worse for being absent from work in relation to their gender reassignment than you would treat them if for example, they were absent because they were ill. This includes not treating them worse when making a decision about what time off they should have, which may include counselling appointments.</p>
<p>Are there concerns that the policy could have a differential impact on <b>disabled people</b>?</p> <p>What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>The policy is applied consistently to all staff regardless of disability - however, monitoring is not currently carried out. Employees can use the grievance procedure if they feel they have been discriminated against and the policy mitigates the risk of an adverse impact as its aim is to ensure that sickness absence is implemented consistently across the Council.</p> <p>This Policy will have a positive impact as it takes into account the Equality Act 2010, which makes it unlawful for employers to</p>



	<p>discriminate against current or prospective employees with disabilities because of a reason relating to their disability. The Council has a legal obligation to look at reasonable adjustments for employees who have a disability to enable them to fulfil their role/potential role. Reasonable adjustments will be considered and HR can seek specialist advice and support on the modification of duties from the Department of Work and Pensions Access to Work Scheme as it may be possible to apply for possible funding for any reasonable adjustments via the scheme. Employees disability-related time off will be dealt with separately from general sick leave to ensure that calculations of pay or other employment decisions do not unlawfully discriminate against the employee.</p>
<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact on <b>lesbian, gay, or bisexual people</b> compared with heterosexual people?</p> <p>What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>The policy is applied consistently to all staff regardless of sexual orientation - however, monitoring is not currently carried out. Employees can use the grievance procedure if they feel they have been discriminated against and the policy mitigates the risk of an adverse impact as its aim is to ensure that sickness absence is implemented consistently across the Council.</p>
<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact on <b>younger or older people</b>?</p> <p>What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>The policy is applied consistently to all staff regardless of age - however, monitoring is not currently carried out. Employees can use the grievance procedure if they feel they have been discriminated against and the policy mitigates the risk of an adverse impact as its aim is to ensure that sickness absence is implemented consistently across the Council. However, an older workforce can be generally associated with medical conditions which present in older age groups.</p>



	<p>Differing areas of work prone to industrial injury this could demonstrate differential impact e.g. manual workers</p>
<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact on grounds of <b>religion or belief</b>?</p> <p>What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>The policy is applied consistently to all staff regardless of religious belief - however, monitoring is not currently carried out. Employees can use the grievance procedure if they feel they have been discriminated against and the policy mitigates the risk of an adverse impact as its aim is to ensure that sickness absence is implemented consistently across the Council.</p>

<b>Action plan and timetable</b>		
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Target/Timetable for completion of actions / responsibility</b>
<b>Better understanding of how the Sickness Absence Policy impacts on different equality groups</b>	Monitoring of sickness absence – this is linked into encouraging disclosure of personal information	Annual from 2011
	Consideration of Sickness Absence training for managers	Summer 2011
<b>Improve awareness amongst employees of the revised sickness absence policy and procedure and other policies designed to support them at work</b>	Raise awareness of Sickness Absence Policy, Dignity at Work Policy and grievance procedure amongst all employees?	February 2011 and on going