

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Employment & Appeals Committee **DATE:** 30 October 2012

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WARD(S): All

PART I **For Information**

Review of Implementation of the new Occupational Health Contract

1 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this is to update the Employment and Appeals Committee on the implementation of the new Occupational Health contract and the early impact on sickness since the 'go live' date of 1 July 2012.

2 Recommendation

The Committee is requested to Resolve that the report be noted.

3 Other Implications

(a) Financial

It is anticipated that, due to Key Performance Indicators that have been set and the requirement to reduce sickness, this will have an impact on the cost of sickness together with other initiatives relating to staff wellbeing that have been launched in September.

In addition, changes to the service provision such as the provider having their own premises for occupational health assessments, will save the Council £45,878.00 per annum.

(b) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

It is anticipated that the new Occupational Health Service will enable the Council, via better assessments, quicker referrals, to ensure that employees return to work and are supported in doing so.

(c) Equalities Impact Assessment

It is considered that there will be no disproportionate impact on any specific groups of staff as referrals will be applied to all staff equally where appropriate.

(d) Workforce

The provision of an effective and efficient occupational health service promotes and supports the Council's Wellbeing package for staff and ensures that by improving

attendance of staff the Council is ensuring the effective delivery of Council services to the public.

4 **Supporting Information**

Background

- 4.1 Following a tender process, the contract for the provision of Occupational Health services was awarded to OHWorks Ltd. This contract has been effective from 1 July 2012. The contract term is for 3 years with options for 2 x 1 year extensions.
- 4.2 The new service is expected to provide a number of key improvements and benefits:

Responsiveness – Under the new contract the Council has agreed that staff should have received OH support within a maximum of 5 working days. Previous to the new contract staff had to wait for up to 14 days for an appointment with occupational health.

Off site location – within the new contract the provider to operate from a non-Council venue in Slough, and where appropriate to carry out home visits.

Support for managers- the new service to offer dedicated telephone and web support for managers.

Better understanding of staff sickness – the new contract to provide a clearer analysis of causes of staff sickness, and provide preventive interventions such as on site physiotherapy and stress management.

- 4.3 The occupational health service was the final external service which alongside the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and the mediation service ensures joined up wellbeing solutions for staff.

Implementation Process

- 4.4 The implementation process to introduce the new provider for OH to the Council was carried out over a number of weeks using various communication methods including;
- Grapevine staff newsletter (May edition)
 - Newsround email (24 May 2012)
 - All user e-mail (31 May 2012)
 - Schools circulars for all Slough Schools.
 - New Intranet page for 'Occupational health and Wellbeing' which also has a link directly to the Employee Assistance programme service.
 - The new provider briefed senior management at the Senior Leadership Team Meeting (11 June 2012)
 - A series of presentations by the new provider to line managers were held between 13 and 15 June 2012.
 - HR Business Partners at Senior Management Team Meetings.

Impact to date

4.5 The contract is being monitored via monthly contract meetings, manager feedback and analysing sickness data. To date the following have been key improvements that have been identified:

- Feedback from a random sample of referring managers in the first month together with the first quarterly report has shown improved turnaround in appointment timescales (75 out of 76 referrals were offered an appointment within 5 days of the referral) and 90% of reports were sent to managers within 2 days of the appointment, instead of within 5 working days of the examination under the previous contract.
- Telephone consultations are being undertaken where employees are physically unable to get to the face to face consultation and this has resulted in more timely advice and less requirement for re-arranged appointments.
- An analysis of a sample of reports from the new provider show concise reporting with advice about the absence with a clear recommendation about the date and in what capacity an employee will return work. In some cases this has resulted in a return to alternative duties for a temporary period of time before resuming the substantive employment. This approach reduces the absence for particular individuals where it would otherwise have been longer term.

Future developments

4.6 Building on these initial positive outcomes the following areas will be a focus on continuing to reduce sickness absence and further enhancing the benefits of this contract:

- Tackling non attendance at consultations i.e. 'Do Not Attends' (DNA's). In the first quarter of the contract there were 13 cases of DNA in this period and these impact on consultation bookings for other staff. 'DNA's' will be addressed in the review of the Sickness Absence policy where it is proposed that employees will revert to statutory sick pay for failure to attend appointments unless there are exceptional circumstances for non-attendance.
- Monitoring impact on sickness absence – regular reports will be analysed for impact on overall absence by 'triangulating' absence reporting. This is being undertaken by comparing number of days sickness absence taken by employees on a monthly basis against the number of referrals to occupational health by managers, to ensure that sickness absence is being appropriately managed by managers. The aim is to reduce the absence rate initially by 2 days (currently 11.3 days) in the first year of the contract.

5. **Background Papers**

None.