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**OXFORD CITY COUNCIL**

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| **To:** | **Council** |
| **Date:** | **29 September 2016** |
| **Report of:** | **Head of Business Improvement** |
| **Title of Report:** | **Attendance Management Policy and Procedure** |

| Summary and recommendations | |
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| **Purpose of report:** | To approve the implementation of a revised Attendance Management Policy and Procedure |
| **Key decision:** | No |
| **Executive Board Member:** | Cllr Susan Brown, Customer and Corporate Services |
| **Corporate Priority:** | Efficient and Effective Council |
| **Policy Framework:** | None |

**Recommendations:** That Council resolves to:

1.   **Approve** the Attendance Management Policy and Procedure attached at Appendix 1 with immediate effect.

2.   **Delegate authority** to the Head of Business Improvement to amend the policies to reflect administrative changes and to correct any factual or legal errors.

| Appendices | |
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| Appendix 1 | Attendance Management Policy and Procedure |
| Appendix 2 | Risk Register |

## Introduction and background

1.   The current policy has been in place for two years and has been effective in terms of maintaining low absence levels, but needs to be reviewed and modified to ensure the attendance management continues to be effectively managed, whilst ensuring that staff morale is maintained. The proposed changes support a strategy of managing short term absences robustly and supporting long terms absentees to return to work at the earliest opportunity.

2. Trade union colleagues are responsible for proposing many of the changes reflected in the revised policy and their input is welcomed.

**Overview of Changes**

3. The policy document and procedures have been simplified.

4. The existing and new policies feature the 'Oxford Factor' trigger which is a means to identify frequent short term absentees. The score increases exponentially with the number of instances of short term absences (and the number of days off each time).

5. The current Oxford Factor trigger score of 100 is retained, however both the second Oxford Factor trigger score of 250 and the 6 day absence trigger in a leave year have been removed. This latter trigger called anyone to a formal attendance management review who had more than 6 days off per year which in some cases is not required.

6. The changes provide the opportunity for a wider range of responses to the management of sickness absence whilst still retaining the responsibility to address issues of frequent short term absence and this is reflected in Appendix 3 of the Policy and Procedure. For example absence as a consequence of a planned operation wouldn't necessarily result in a formal meeting, but will still be managed though the return to work process. The process for progression to further stages has also been simplified.

7. The documentation used to manage the process will be reviewed and simplified and workshops will be arranged to introduce the updated process and reinforce the line manager's role in managing sickness absence.

8. These changes are expected to help managers focus their attention on the cases which need more support rather than the current less tailored approach.

**Trade Union Position**

9. Both trade unions have been consulted and they welcome the change of emphasis in the management of absence by allowing greater flexibility by line managers when deciding appropriate courses of action and better use of the return to work process to identify where and what action to take before invoking the use of attendance management meetings. Both unions want to continue to work with management about the operation of the policy and incorporate any further agreed changes in the management guidance (for example managing sickness in relation to our disabled colleagues and work related absences and their treatment under the policy).

10. Both trade unions will put the revised policy to their respective branch committees during September for ratification.

**Financial implications**

11. Failure to implement and maintain an effective Attendance Management Policy could result in increased levels of sickness absence and the costs associated with this. The revision to this policy and procedure will assist with the continued effective management of attendance. Keeping absence to a minimum reduces direct financial costs to the Council in terms of sickness pay and covering absences by agency staff and increases efficiency, productivity and staff morale.

**Legal issues**

12. Employment policies form part of the Council's terms and conditions of employment for all employees, requiring all staff to adhere to their contents. Managers are required to ensure consistent, fair and equitable application of these policies to meet employment law requirements and good practice.

**Level of risk**

13. A risk register can be found at Appendix 2.

**Equalities impact**

14. An Equalities Impact Assessment is not necessary. The revisions are intended to ensure a fair and consistent approach to attendance management across all areas of the Council. It also reinforces the supportive nature of the process and ensures that any disability issues and adjustments are considered at every stage in the process.

| Report author | Helen Bishop |
|---|---|
| Job title | Head of Business Improvement |
| Service area or department | Business Improvement |
| Telephone | 01865 252233 |
| e-mail | hbishop@oxford.gov.uk |

| **Background Papers:** None |
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