

MANAGEMENT BOARD

SICKNESS ABSENCE

Note by DHRC

Purpose

1. In February the Management Board asked for further information about long term sickness absence (LTS) within the House of Commons and PICT.

Action

2. No action is needed. The Board is asked to note the reasons for the sick leave figures.

Detail

3. The Board asked for information about the level of LTS, issues and causes, distinguishing between physical and mental health issues. A full exploration of these issues by the Director of HR Services is attached.

Summary

4. LTS is defined as 20 days or longer off sick. In summary:
 - The figures for LTS have been slightly reduced but the proportion is still higher than the public sector benchmark (29%).
 - Physical causes of LTS are the most significant in the House, for both the number of days' absence attributable to each cause and the highest average number of days' absence per case for each cause. Physical causes in other public sector organisations are of comparable types.
 - Manual workers have higher levels of long term sickness absence than non-manual workers; there are higher levels of LTS in the Department of Facilities, suggesting this trend also obtains within the House, and probably accounts for our slightly higher proportion of LTS.
 - The level of LTS caused by mental health issues in the House is low; the number of short-term cases is higher, but the average duration and total days absence due to stress and depression are low. This may be because the House provides a high level of support for mental health issues through SHWS. Stress is now the most common cause of LTS in other organisations.

5. The current LTS cases in the House should not cause undue concern. Action for the future should focus on ensuring that current House policies and procedures, which already reflect best practice, are effectively implemented.

Alix Langley

DHRC

April 2012