

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE - 14 JANUARY 2015

REPORT BY THE HEAD OF PEOPLE AND PROPERTY SERVICES

HOME WORKERS' ABSENCE REVIEW

WARD(S) AFFECTED: NONE

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**Purpose/Summary of Report**

To review Home Workers absence management levels and to consideration recommendations

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE:**

**That:**

(A)	the report and findings be noted.
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**1.0 Background**

1.1 The Human Resources Committee requested on 22 October 2014 following the Sickness Absence Report 2013/2014 that a further review was completed on Home Workers absence levels.

1.2 The Sickness Absence Report 2013/2014 stated "A comparison between home workers and office based employees sickness absence in 2013/14, showed no differential between the two groups (home workers 4.80 days per FTE compared to 4.71 days for office based employees). It is common to expect to see a reduction in sickness absence for home workers this was not the case for the Council in 2013/14."

**2.0 Report**

2.1 In 2013/14 there were 49 employees identified as Home Workers with home working contracts at the Council. To be categorised as a Home Worker an employee will work a regular number of

days at home (a regular pattern of home working is established - a minimum of 2 days per week). They will not have a designated workspace or desk in the office, although they have access to shared facilities, such as team desking.

- 2.2 21 employees became home workers in 2010 as part of the Changing the Way We Work programme; with a further 15 employees becoming home workers in 2012 as part of the Revenues and Benefits shared service with Stevenage Borough Council. Other employees have become home workers as part of the authority's flexible working policy.
- 2.3 Before any employee can become a home worker the impact on the employee, service and team will be taken into consideration as part of the application process. There should be no increase or decrease in workload for colleagues as a result of an employee working at or from home and as a result of that consideration not all posts at the council are suitable for home working.
- 2.4 The 2013/14 Absence Report provided a comparison between home workers and office based employees for 2013/14, showing no differential between the two groups. Home workers absence was recorded as 4.80 FTE days compared to 4.71 FTE days for office based employees.
- 2.5 The home workers absence was analysed between 2010/11 – 2013/14. We can conclude looking at the absence stats and analysis that during this four year period 8 employees have not recorded any absence since becoming home workers in 2010. There are 3 employees with underlying health issues whose absence levels have reduced since becoming home workers. Five employees have had an injury and/or operation during the review period which has made their pattern of absence unusual. The findings show that the home workers sickness absence levels are not higher than expected.
- 2.6 When home working and flexible working patterns were initially introduced in 2010; national reports showed organisations should experience a drop in absence levels for employees who embraced flexible working opportunities. In current reports where flexible working practices are more common, there is no distinction in regard to absenteeism levels between the two different working practices home working and office based (CIPD Absence Management Report 2014).

- 2.7 All employees' absence is reported on a monthly basis to the Directors and Service Heads. The Human Resources Officers work with the service managers to ensure the absence management policy is implemented fairly and consistently across the council whether the employee is a home worker or office based.
- 2.8 Managers have been receiving Bitesize training on the new absence policy and support in the implementation of the revised absence triggers.
- 2.9 It is recommended that absence levels will continue to be monitored for all employees and the Absence Management Policy followed for all employees hitting the absence trigger levels.

### **3.0 Consultations**

- 3.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within Essential Reference Paper 'A'.

#### Background Papers - none

Sickness Absence Report April 2013 – 31 March 2014

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