EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Partial Assessment Form

Policy, practice, function or project assessed	Management of sickness absence policy and procedure
Lead Officer	Jill Mellors
Team	Kate Wood, Peter Harris, Geoff Sissons & Chris Freeman
Start date of assessment	23 July 2009
Completion of assessment	February 2010

Please use this form to record your findings in relation to the assessment of an existing policy, function, service or practice.

A. POLICY, PRACTICE, FUNCTION OR PROJECT TO BE ASSESSED

A1. Please describe what are the main aims, objectives, purpose and intended outcomes of the policy or function?

To comply with legislation (including the new Equality Act 2010), the introduction of the new 'fit notes', and to give guidance to employees and managers on the reporting and management of sickness absence.
To reduce sickness absence
To identify sickness absence trends
To promote wellbeing

A2. Is this policy or function associated with any other Council policy or priority?

Policies:
Recruitment & Selection; Probation; Capability
Health & Safety; Council Safety Manual: Drugs & alcohol; Lone working; Smoke free; Stress management; Accident reporting; Violent & Abusive customers; Prevention of violence at work guidance; DSE eye sight testing procedure; Risk assessments; Customer Service strategy; Wellbeing strategy.

Functions:
HR-Payroll: advises managers in implementation of the policy; assists with meetings; more complex situations need more HR support/ resources; writes to OH doctors prior to appointments and receives advice from OH, which informs further meetings with manager and employer. Health screening arranged for employees working with power tools and machinery; health screening arranged as part of Wellbeing strategy.

Service first
Front & back office service delivery all areas
Health & Safety officer
Safety committee

Priorities:
To reduce sickness levels
To meet PI targets BV12
Customer Services Standards

A3. Who are the intended beneficiaries/stakeholders of the policy or function? How many people are affected and from what sections of the community?

All employees
Customers (if employees are absent/below par and customer needs interaction on that day)

A4. Is the policy/function corporate and far-reaching?

Corporate policy.
Non-compliance with notification can lead to disciplinary action and dismissal.
Promotes equality of treatment across the Council.
Opportunity to improve staff/team morale, and spread workloads evenly due to reduction of absences.
Supports anyone with a disability to maintain access to work wherever possible

A5. Are you expecting to make any significant change to the policy or service in the near future? If so, please give details.

Yes.
- To amend the advice around ill health pension applications – this is not detailed in the policy
- To implement the new 'Fit note' – This has now been introduced
- In terms of the delivery of this policy, training on Sickness Absence Management has been scheduled for managers in early 2011.

A6. Is this a new or existing policy or function?

An existing policy

B. EVIDENCE/ DATA and CONSULTATION

It is important to consider all information that is available in determining whether the policy or function could have a differential impact. Please attach examples of monitoring information, research or consultation reports.

B1. What monitoring or other information do you have about relevant target groups, which will show the impact of the policy or function?

Workforce statistics; benchmark data; sickness figures
Monthly trigger reports on sickness to managers, Service Heads and Corporate Managers

B2. Have you compared the data you have with the equality profile of the local population? What does it show?

No information available as sickness trends by equality profile of local population.

B3. Have you identified any improvements or other changes that could be made from monitoring the data?

Need to link sickness data and workforce data
Further training for managers on managing employees, particularly with regard to persistent short term absences by the same employees. Funding from EERA to deliver this.
High stress related absence with high figures given as work related stress (i.e. financial situation at SCDC; frozen posts; restructuring). There is also stress absence related to personal situations.

B4. Have you consulted or involved external stakeholders about the policy or function? If so, what were their views?

Council medical advisors (OH);
Trade unions – who felt that it was too tough to have RTW interviews each time someone was absent, but benchmarking shows this is common practice. There is also ample evidence from the Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development that demonstrates the effectiveness of RTWIs in reducing sickness absence and helping employees with personal problems that sickness absence may mask.

B5. Have you undertaken any consultation with staff to assess their perception of any impacts of the policy or function? If so, what has been learnt from them?

Forum on sickness absence, Chaired by Executive Director - Operations
Employee survey – inconsistencies of approach
HR give advice and support to employees and managers and make assessments through observation and feedback
Ad hoc feedback from managers and employees about the process

B6. Please provide information about any other consultation, research, or involvement undertaken in relation to this impact assessment.

Policies from other Councils or organisations benchmarked as part of policy review. **Summary attached**.

C1. IMPACT OF THE POLICY OR FUNCTION

Assess the potential impact on each of the equality strands/groups. The impact could be negative, positive or neutral. If you assess a negative impact for any of the groups then you will need to assess whether that impact is low, medium or high. Refer to the evidence you use.

DESCRIPTION OF IMPACT	Nature of Impact (Positive, Neutral, Adverse)	Extent of Impact (Low, Medium, High)
GENDER: Identify the potential impact of the policy or function on men and women		
The policy is inclusive and applies to all employees regardless of gender. Pregnancy related sickness is not counted in the reported figures.	**Neutral**	-
MATERNITY		
The policy appropriately refers to the Maternity Leave Policy		
RACE: Identify the potential impact of the policy or function on different race/ethnic groups		
The policy is inclusive and applies to all employees regardless of race.	**Neutral**	-
DISABILITY: Identify the potential impact of the policy or function on disabled people		
The policy is inclusive and applies to all employees. Absence due to disability will count in reaching triggers and in statistical data. Disabled employees do not have higher rates of absence than those without disabilities. However an employee with a disability and high levels of absence may feel they are being unfairly treated if proper explanations not provided by line manager. Employees with underlying conditions: The Council uses the broadest definition of disability to include long-term conditions that may have existed for more than 12 months. This means the Council is good at trying to make reasonable adjustments. The Policy refers to the Equality Act 2010 where necessary	**Neutral**	-
AGE: Identify the potential impact of the policy or function on different age groups		
The policy is inclusive and applies to all employees regardless of age.	**Neutral**	-
SEXUAL ORIENTATION: potential impact of the policy on lesbian, gay men, bisexual or heterosexual people		
The policy is inclusive and applies to all employees regardless of sexual orientation.	**Neutral**	-
TRANSGENDER		
The policy includes a supportive statement for employees undergoing gender realignment surgery/treatment as well as other 'corrective procedures'.		
RELIGION/FAITH: Identify the potential impact the policy on different religious/faith groups		

The policy is inclusive and applies to all employees regardless of religion or faith.	**Neutral**	-
Marital/Civil Partnership Status		
The policy applies to all employees regardless of marital/civil partnership status.		
OTHER - groups		
Parental status may impact on personal sickness Relationship issues	**Neutral**	-

PLEASE NOTE: Following completion of the section above, if the nature of the impact is adverse then you may need to proceed to a full equality impact assessment.

C2. Could you minimise or remove any adverse or potential impact that is high, medium or low significance, in advance of a full impact assessment? Explain how.

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C3. Does the policy or function actively promote equal opportunities and good community relations? Or could changes be made so that it does so?

- Employees worry over/ misunderstand reason for attending OH – is it leading to dismissal?
- Some managers have a very old fashioned view of OH referrals, seeing them as punishment for employees.
- Managers do not take the calls, start the self-cert form or make the best use of the return to work interview but this is being addressed in the policy review.
- More training or mentoring for managers is being provided.
- More explanation within the policy of the reasons for OH and advice and how this is used
- Publicity

C4. Please provide any further information, qualitative or quantitative that does not fit into the questions but you feel has a likely impact on this assessment.

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D. CONCLUSIONS			
D1. Was there sufficient data to complete the partial assessment?	Yes?	☐	**If "NO", what arrangements are in place for evidence gathering and continuing with the assessment?**
	No?	✔	Evidence there but not linked
D2. Is the outcome of the partial assessment that the policy or function would have an adverse impact (medium or high impact) on one or more target group?	Yes?	☐	**If "YES", will you proceed to a full assessment? If so, what arrangements are in place to carry out the full assessment?**
	No?	✔	
D3. Is the outcome of the partial assessment that the policy or function would have a neutral or positive impact on equalities?	Yes?	✔	**If "YES", have you included proposals in the Action Plan to further improve the impact of the policy or function on equalities?** **YES** **Do you plan to review the service or policy again in future to assess whether there has been any change? If so, when?** **YES – date?**
	No?	☐	**Has the Equalities Steering Group and the Consultative Forum reviewed the assessment? If so what were their comments?** **NO**

D4. Do you have any other conclusions/outcomes from the partial assessment?

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ACTION PLAN for enhancing existing practice

Recommendation/ issue to be addressed	Planned Milestone	Planned completion of milestone (date)	Officer Responsible	Progress
Pension information	Add pension information to policy	?	?	
Review policy to address any issues raised in this EQIA	Policy reviewed and, if necessary, revised and submitted for approval in the usual way	?	?	

RESOURCES

Does the above action plan require any additional resources?

Resourced from within HR-Payroll team depending on workload and place in cycle of policy review

ARRANGEMENTS FOR MONITORING

Please give your plans for monitoring the achievement of the above actions.

Any amendments made in response to EQIA for particular target groups monitored when looking at monitoring data

SIGN OFF: The officers below confirm that this partial assessment has been completed in accordance with the Council's guidance

Signature of Lead Officer		**Date:**
Signature of Corporate Manager or Chief Officer:		**Date:**

Please retain the original form on your service area and return a copy of the completed form to the Equality & Diversity Officer.