

Manchester City Council's Sickness Absence: understanding & improving sickness absence

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I spent my Q-step internship with Manchester City Council (MCC), focussing on levels of sickness absence across the council's diverse workforce within the human resources,

workforce intelligence team. The council's workforce is made up of services with one of the main aims being to find out which services have the highest number of days lost to sickness

absence. Objectives & Skills Developed

Objectives:

- To highlight services with high levels of sickness absence and investigate trends across these services
- Find case studies of other companies and councils to benchmark the council to
- To suggest potential ways and service specific targets to reduce the cost of sickness absence for MCC
- Relate trends to the workforce's gender and age

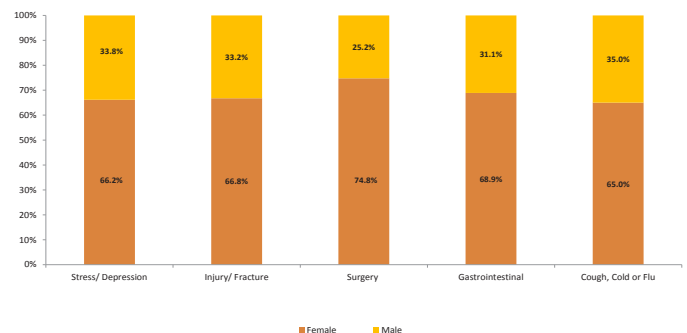
Skills Developed:

- Qualitative skills- confident at Excel
- Improved researching skills- benchmarking and finding case studies
- Improved communication skills- talking to business partners and attending meetings
- Presentation skills- created a presentation as an end product which was shared around human resources and services

For each financial year, stress/depression has consistently lost the highest % of days out of all absence reasons...

Financial Year	% of days lost due to stress/ depression
2014/15	27%
2015/16	26%
2016/17	25%
2017/18	26%

Top 5 Reasons for Sickness Absence by Gender



The overall top 5 reasons for sickness absence broken down by gender

Method

Pre-existing data sets were used on Excel in the form of an 'incidences of absence report' on all absences since 2014- 2018 and the most recent 'July 2018 deployment'. The first step was to condense these very large data sets to just include relevant information. This was done by using the 'VLOOKUP' tool to create a new data set from these pre-existing ones. Summary profiles of services at this point in time were also created from the deployment.

The 'days lost per FTE' due to sickness absence was used as a measure to determine which services had high levels of sickness absence. For services with high levels of sickness absence, a sickness absence profile was made reflecting the main types of absence, gender split absences, the age split of absences and the 3 job positions accounting for the highest number of days lost per FTE. All these aspects were visually presented using graphs.

Results and Conclusions

MCC's overall absence:

- 336,000 days were lost between May 2014- April 2018
- This equates to approximately 12.5 days lost per FTE
- 25% of all MCC's days lost were due to stress/ depression

Services with the most sickness absence incidences:

- Manchester Fayre- Catering- 13.33 days lost per FTE
- Adult Social Care Teams- 13.41 days lost per FTE
- DSAS- 17.75 days lost per FTE
- Fostering & Adoption- 17.27 days lost per FTE
- Customer Service Organisations- 20.28 days lost per FTE
- Revenues & Benefits- 9.98 days lost per FTE
- Legal Services- 10.81 days lost per FTE

Suggestions to improve sickness absence:

- For stress/ depression- look at absence patterns 3 months before 'long term' absences as short/middle term often appear first
- Improve adverting current wellbeing programs for frontline staff
- Introduce new initiatives – 'duvet days', attendance prizes