Appendix 2

Ref No.

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) for Policies, Procedures and Services

Proposal name	**Sickness Absence Policy**		
Directorate	Resources and Transformation		
Service	HR Strategy and Planning Team		
Responsible Officer	Hannah Hewston-Jones		
Proposal planning start	26/01/2024	**Proposal start date (due or actual date)**	01/09/2024

1	**What is the purpose of the proposal?**	**Yes / No**	**New / revision**
	Policy	Yes	Revision
	Procedure	No	N/A
	Guidance	No	N/A
	Is this a service to customers/staff/public?	No	N/A
	If yes, is it contracted or commissioned?		
	Other - give details		

2	**What is the business case for this proposal? Please provide the main purpose of the service, intended outcomes and reasons for change?**
	The purpose of the Sickness Absence Policy is to set out acceptable standards of attendance and the process for monitoring and managing sickness absence in a fair, consistent, supportive and reasonable manner, in line with relevant employment legislation. The purpose of this review and consultation is because of a system driven change due to the need to revert to Oracle seeded functionality and a long standing ask of trade unions. The removal of Bradford Factor Score and replaced with trigger point.

3	**Who is the proposal likely to affect?**		
	People in Walsall	**Yes / No**	**Detail**
	All	No	The policy applies to all council employees, including those in schools, Assistant Directors, Executive Directors and the Chief Executive. The policy applies to all council employees, excluding those in schools where the Governing Body has delegated authority, casual employees and agency workers.
	Specific group/s	No	
	Council employees	Yes	
	Other (identify)		

4	**Please provide service data relating to this proposal on your customer's protected characteristics.**

As of 31 March 2023 the total number of Walsall Council employees (excluding Schools) were 3015. The Council's workforce is made up of 67.23% females. 24.65% of the workforce are classified as minority ethnic. In total there were 161 employees (5.34% of the workforce) who declared they had a disability, as defined by the Equality Act 2010. 3.35% of the workforce are under 25 years of age, 33.2% of the workforce are 55 years or older, 55-59 years old are the largest age group making up 16.65% of the workforce.

5 Please provide details of all engagement and consultation undertaken for this proposal. (Please use a separate box for each engagement/consultation).

Formal consultation commenced 07/03/2023 to 21/13/2023 with Assistant Directors, Heads of Service, Senior Managers and HR.
Stakeholders including Payroll & Pensions, Equality team.
Trade Unions were consulted at the same time.

Consultation Activity

Type of engagement/consultation	Formal consultation with wider council, TU and stakeholders.	**Date**	07/03/2023 to 21/03/2023
Who attended/participated?	Assistant Directors/Heads of Service, TU, Stakeholders, HRM, HR Ops.		
Protected characteristics of participants	A range of protected characteristics including, gender, race, age, disability.		

Feedback
As part of the consultation process, the revised policy was emailed to the wider council, stakeholders & TUs to review and make comments on.

- Removed reference to 'stages' in any absence policy and process given the sensitivity around cancer and stages. They have replaced stages with steps.
- This seems more straightforward.
- Consultees asked for some examples of triggers to help explain the process.
- Wording amended regarding Ill Health Retirement (IHR) and financial advice.
- Wording amended around the eligibility for IHR to include minimum vesting period (2 years of contribution).
- Need to consider adding pro rate for part time employees.

Updated policy – Feb 2024

Following development of the new absence module in One Source matters were raised around system functionality and management reporting, which have resulted in a further revision of the draft Sickness Absence Policy from working days to calendar days.

The changes support the system amendments and still meets the trade union request of removing the Bradford Factor Score (BFS) and replaces it with day/occurrence 'triggers' to prompt management action where an employee's sickness absence has

reached an unacceptable level.

The short-term sickness (STS) absence trigger which requires a SAR meeting to be held is triggered once the employee has either a combined total of 14 calendar days sickness absence (pro-rata part time based on modified days) or 3 separate occurrences of absence in a rolling 12-month period.

6 Concise overview of all evidence, engagement and consultation

Formal consultation raised no concerns over protected characteristics. The main points of feedback following the consultation are as follows:

- Consultees are happy to see the new trigger points being introduced.
- They feel that the policy seems more straight forward.
- Some minor amendments to clarify wording and aid understanding.

The policy will be submitted to CMT on 28 March 2024 followed by Personnel Committee for approval on 22/04/2024.

7 How may the proposal affect each protected characteristic or group? The effect may be positive, negative, neutral or not known. Give reasons and if action is needed.

Characteristic	Affect	Reason	Action needed Yes / No
Age	Neutral	The policy applies to all employees – no impact foreseen	**No**
Disability	Neutral	Sickness absence guidance will provide further detail for managers, to allow them to appropriately support staff with disability-related absence.	**No**

	Gender reassignment	Neutral	The policy applies to all employees – no impact foreseen	**No**
	Marriage and civil partnership	Neutral	The policy applies to all employees – no impact foreseen	**No**
	Pregnancy and maternity	Neutral	The policy sets out that sickness absence related to pregnancy/maternity will not contribute to absence triggers. Pregnancy-related illness within 4 weeks of an employee's due date is dealt with under the council's Family Friendly Policy.	**No**
	Race	Negative	Potential impact on employees / workers where English is not their first language as they may not understand the policy.	**Yes**
	Religion or belief	Neutral	The policy applies to all employees – no impact foreseen	**No**
	Sex	Neutral	The policy applies to all employees – no impact foreseen	**No**
	Sexual orientation	Neutral	The policy applies to all employees / workers – no impact foreseen	**No**

8	**Does your proposal link with other proposals to have a cumulative effect on particular equality groups? If yes, give details.**	(Delete one) **No**
	N/A	

9	**Which justifiable action does the evidence, engagement and consultation feedback suggest you take?**	
	A	No major change required
	B	**Adjustments needed to remove barriers or to better promote equality**
	C	Continue despite possible adverse impact
	D	Stop and rethink your proposal

Action and monitoring plan

Action Date	Action	Responsibility	Outcome Date	Outcome
Day of launch	The policy to be explained/made available to affected employees / workers.	Employee's / workers line manager should make themselves available to explain the policy to ensure understanding and offer support and guidance to allow individuals to achieve the requirements.	As and when required	
Day of launch	The policy to be explained/made available in other languages on request for employees / workers whose first language is not English.	Appropriate liaison as required with the council's Interpretation, Translation, Transcription and Easy Read (ITTE) service provider.	As and when required	
Day of launch	Alternative formats (audio and Easy Read) for disabled employees to be made available on request.	Liaison as required with the appropriate council procured services; audio formats from Walsall Society for the Blind and Easy Read.	As and when required	

Update to EqIA	
Date	**Detail**
Use this section for updates following the commencement of your proposal.	

Contact us

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