

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT: 'HELP ME TO FIND SOMEWHERE TO LIVE IN MY LOCALITY' – FEBRUARY 2019

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This bi-monthly report highlights the key areas for the strategic purpose 'Help me to find somewhere to live in my locality'.
- 1.2 The key corporate measures suite contains a number of measures used by the organisation to better understand the corporate picture. The full suite is reported 3 times each year, with the exception of sickness absence, which is contained in each report. This report contains the full suite.

2. CONTEXT

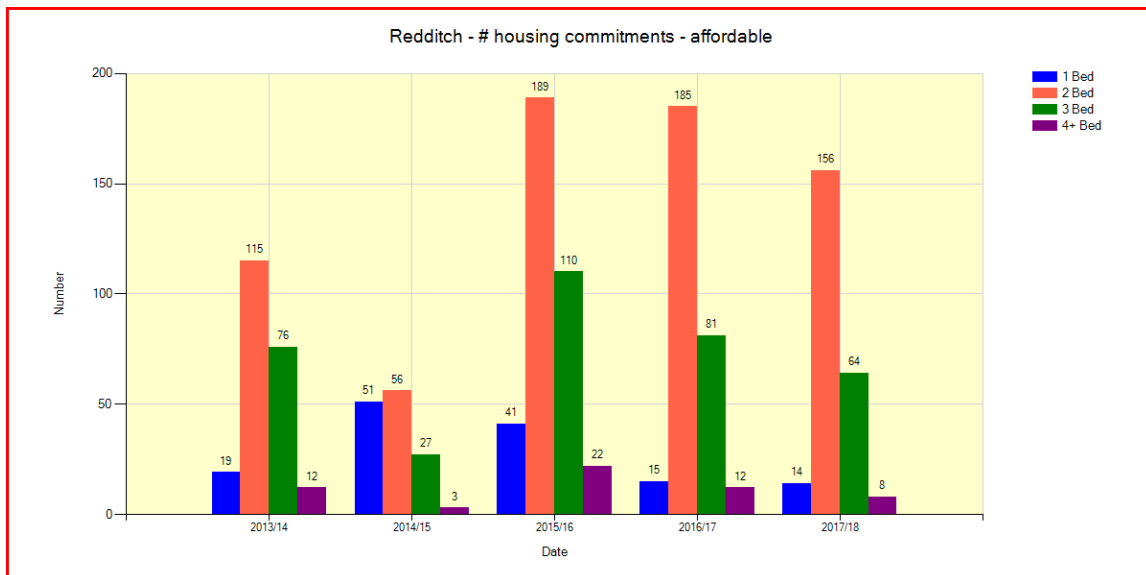
2.1 Housing Strategic Intervention Overview

i) Preventing vulnerability

As part of the strategic intervention which has identified priority themes, preventing vulnerability within Redditch has been a focus. RPEG (Redditch Partnership Executive Group) along with Connecting Families, have also been focussing on mental health within Redditch. Given the close links, a day of journey mapping of a Council tenant as a detailed case study, took place in November. Representatives from NHS, Police, Fire, Education, and DWP all took part using live systems. Valuable cost benefit analysis work was also undertaken. Individual organisations took away actions and there have been positive developments in the support to the individual whose case was mapped. The learning from this event will guide next steps for the preventing vulnerability theme; with a RPEG meeting in late January to discuss what the learning means for the whole system. As the case was quite high level, involving many complex issues, there is going to be another case mapped in early 2019, to understand the impact of 'lower level' mental health to individuals/families. There are concerns however, with the Connecting Families project ending, that resource to support this area could be diminished. RPEG is also concentrating on looking at how Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) affect adult mental health.

ii) Delivering affordable and quality homes (including Housing Growth Programme)

Progress is being made in this area – the council has an agreed housing growth programme which enables it to purchase properties through a number of routes. Most recently the council has moved to declare a number of sites surplus with a plan to build over 60 new council homes and an architect has been commissioned to submit full planning applications for the first two sites and officers are submitting outline planning applications for the remaining sites. We are also receiving direct approaches now from developers gauging interest in our appetite to purchase affordable provision from them. Pressure remains to get right to buy receipts spent in a timely way so acknowledge a current over-reliance on buy-backs. That said, our work with a private developer at Dixon Close nears a successful conclusion with some of the properties purchased now occupied by new council tenants.



Housing commitments which contribute towards meeting the Borough's housing requirement come from several sources including newly built properties, change of use to a dwelling from another use such as an office, conversions (for example from a barn to a dwelling) or sub-division (for example from a house to flats). This measure records all affordable dwellings with full planning permission by size (number of bedrooms) but makes no distinction between those for rent or shared ownership.

2.2 Housing Improvement Plan

i) Involving tenants

Consultation has taken place and will continue on new policies and key decisions, e.g. the Allocations Policy & the new Housing Management System. A survey of tenants who have gone through the voids process was undertaken during the summer. The results are currently being analysed. Officers will work closely with the Policy Team, who cover engagement organisation-wide, to ensure that tenant involvement is as effective and inclusive as possible. Tenant engagement and consultation will form part of the service reviews planned for March 2019 onwards.

ii) Capital Programme

The Housing & Property service is undergoing a fundamental review, via the Strategic Review Improvement Plan, and the way that planned works, capital projects and compliance contracts are delivered to our customers is being reviewed and improved. Following the review of capital projects last financial year, it was recommended and approved to reduce capital works and contracts until such time as a detailed analysis of the Council's stock has been undertaken by carrying out a stock condition survey and to concentrate on ensuring compliance to statutory legislation and regulations.

○ The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

To ensure compliance with the legislation we have been reviewing all the existing Fire Risk Assessments (FRA) along with recommended actions. We have also identified 8 high risk schemes following reviewing the initial FRA's and subsequent site surveys. The sites initially identified in phase 1 of the works are as follows:

- Downsell House
- St Davids House
- Mendip House
- Auxerre House
- Bredon House

- Arthur Jobson House
- Bentley Close
- Winslow Close

Further health checks were carried out on these sites and a plan of works has been completed for 5 sites with works on site at Downsell House. We have also been in regular contact with Hereford & Worcestershire Fire Service to ensure all works and plans have been reviewed and agreed jointly.

- Control of Asbestos Regulations 2015

To ensure compliance with the relevant regulations we have procured the services of TERSUS Group to carry out asbestos surveying and sampling for the housing blocks and properties. Following a review of previous asbestos surveys we have identified 14 high risk schemes which required further surveys or asbestos removal. We have carried out further surveys at each of these schemes and where asbestos containing materials which are in a poor condition or could pose a risk to the tenants, staff and contractors then these have been marked for removal. We have removed the asbestos at Downsell House and Mendip House is next on the programme for removal.

- Electricity at Work Regulations 1989 & Associated British Standards

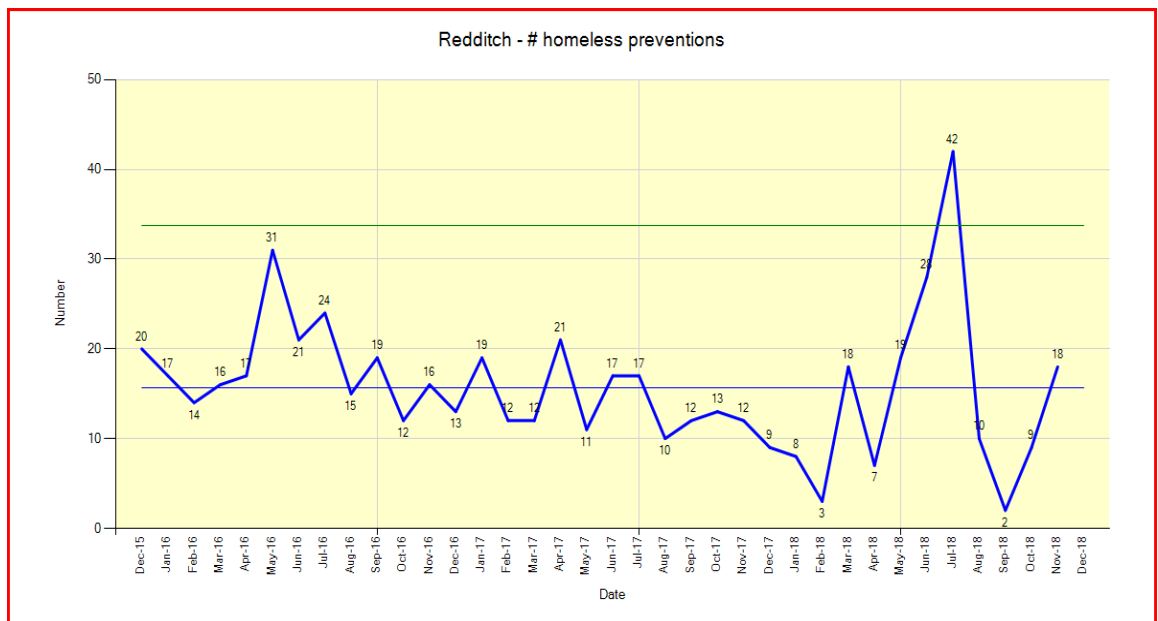
As part of the fire risk assessments a review has also been undertaken on the condition and statutory inspection regime of the fire alarm systems and emergency lighting within the housing blocks. The review involved visiting over 200 schemes and assessing the condition and functionality of the fire alarm systems and emergency lighting. We are in the process of putting together a plan of works but the category 1 works which were identified were completed immediately to protect the integrity of the fire detection systems.

We have also identified 23 high risk schemes where we had instructed our electrical contractor to carry out further investigations. 23 fire alarm condition reports on the sheltered schemes / larger blocks and 80 technical reports on the smaller blocks have been undertaken. The reports are currently being reviewed and will be included in the electrical tender currently in preparation.

- Stock condition surveys

Asprey Solutions were procured to provide software solutions to record stock condition data. Following a review of compliance, additional modules were purchased to manage asbestos, fire risk assessment and electrical inspection and testing. The software procured will enable us to manage our compliance in accordance with legislation and statutory inspections alongside our asset management processes. We are currently mobilising the software with asset registers, archetypes and data structures being populated to load into the system. We are envisaging the software being ready for site surveys in January with a sample size of 20% being completed by 31/03/19. Further surveys will be completed during the financial year 2019/20.

iii) Homelessness prevention



Under the Homeless Reduction Act implemented April 2018, prevention and relief of homelessness is the main focus prior to a decision made in respect of homeless acceptances. New processes have been incorporated, and therefore the number of homeless acceptances is likely to decrease and numbers of prevention and relief will increase. In July 18 legacy cases from the old legislation were processed, distorting the figures.

One of the key issues and barriers for individuals remains availability and affordability of private rented housing, indeed access to affordable housing. Internally, staffing levels have been a challenge but recruitment for Housing Options Officers posts will commence by the end of January. There has been a real success with the trainee officers taken on in June 18 to graded posts. Recruitment focused on seeking the right behaviours and skills rather than rely on previous experience and the individuals have already progressed to owning cases.

2.3 Support and advice to landlords and those within the Private rented sector

Work continues in this area with the Private Sector Team providing responses to incoming enquiries from both landlords and tenants across the private sector. The team have taken over 20 applications recently from private landlords registering their properties under the new Houses in Multiple Occupation regulations. The service always tries to resolve disputes between landlords and tenants through negotiation but this is not always possible so it also undertakes enforcement action locally, and this work recently led to a successful prosecution of a Redditch landlord in the courts, after he pleaded guilty to non-compliance to a Full Improvement Notice Section 11/12 Housing Act 2004. This conviction resulted in a fine of nearly 4K, and generated considerable media interest.

A North Worcestershire Landlords Conference was held in September 2018 with officers working in partnership with the National Landlords Association to run the event. The event was attended by over 60 landlords with several topics discussed including Tax, legislation update and the new criteria for HMO licensing.

The team is also a key part of the delivery of aids and adaptations to homes in the Borough which in turn enables the occupants to remain in their properties and continue to live independently. During the current financial year, the service has approved 65 Disabled Facilities Grant interventions in Redditch. 34 of these interventions have been completed and the remaining 31 are ongoing. Strategically, officers are also working

with colleagues across the county, together with Foundations, on the broader task of developing the Better Care Fund approach, and recommissioning the delivery of DFGs in Worcestershire. Existing arrangements with the Home Improvement Agency for the delivery of DFGs end in March 2020.

3. **KEY CORPORATE MEASURES SUITE**

- 3.1 The key corporate measures suite contains a number of measures used by the organisation to better understand the corporate picture. The full suite is reported on 3 times each year, with the exception of sickness absence, which is contained in each report.

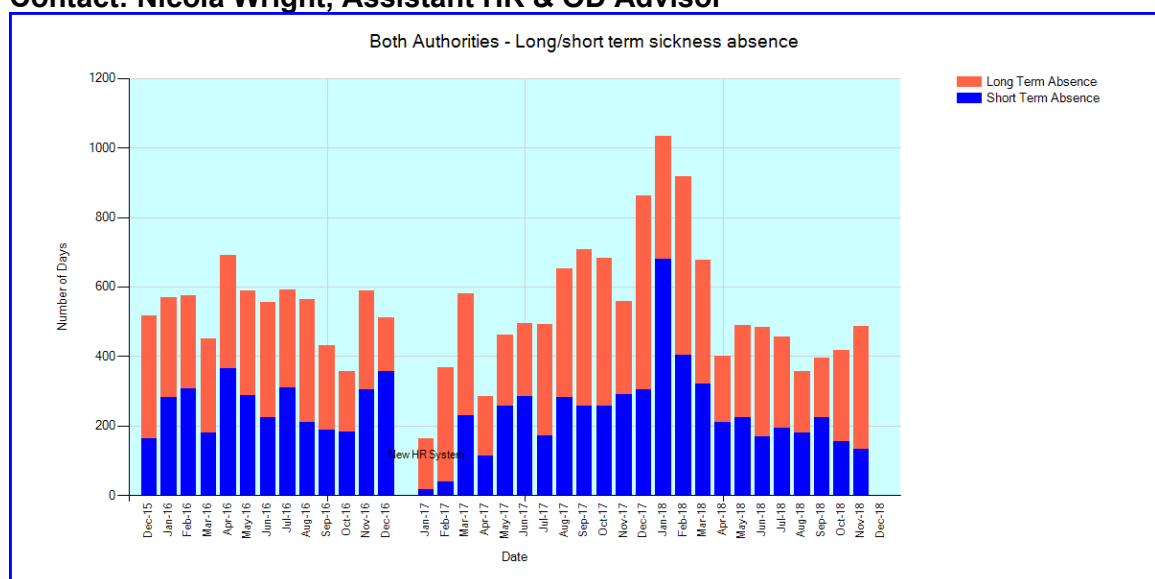
Sickness Data

In order to support the organisation to capture as comprehensive a set of sickness data as possible, a new online self-serve module was implemented in 2017 as part of the HR21 system; this has now been rolled out to all service areas. HR continues to monitor sickness absence data and offer support and advice to managers when managing sickness absence in their teams. HR are continuing to work with managers on the use of the current policy in relation to both sickness types; however, there is a review of the sickness absence policy underway. The HR team have been actively working with the managers to look at the application of the sickness policy and are currently in the process of finalising a new policy in line with the recommendations. We anticipate that the draft policy will be sent for approval in early 2019, with mandatory training to support managers. Additional management information is being produced and provided to all 4th tier managers and above on a monthly basis.

As part of a sickness absence working group, an internal issue log is monitored and maintained relating to sickness; this information can then be used to assist in future development of absence management. The issue log is divided into four main sections policy, process, training, and communication, each being tackled individually.

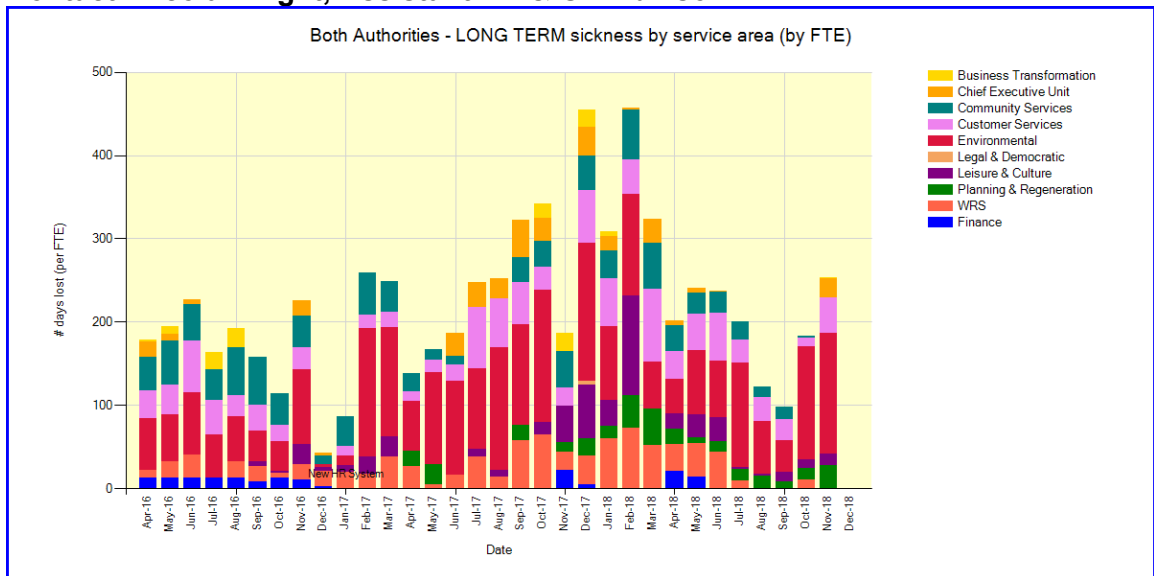
Future planned self-service system development also includes managers having access to sickness reports and a return to work interview facility.

Long/Short Term Sickness Absence **Contact: Nicola Wright, Assistant HR & OD Advisor**



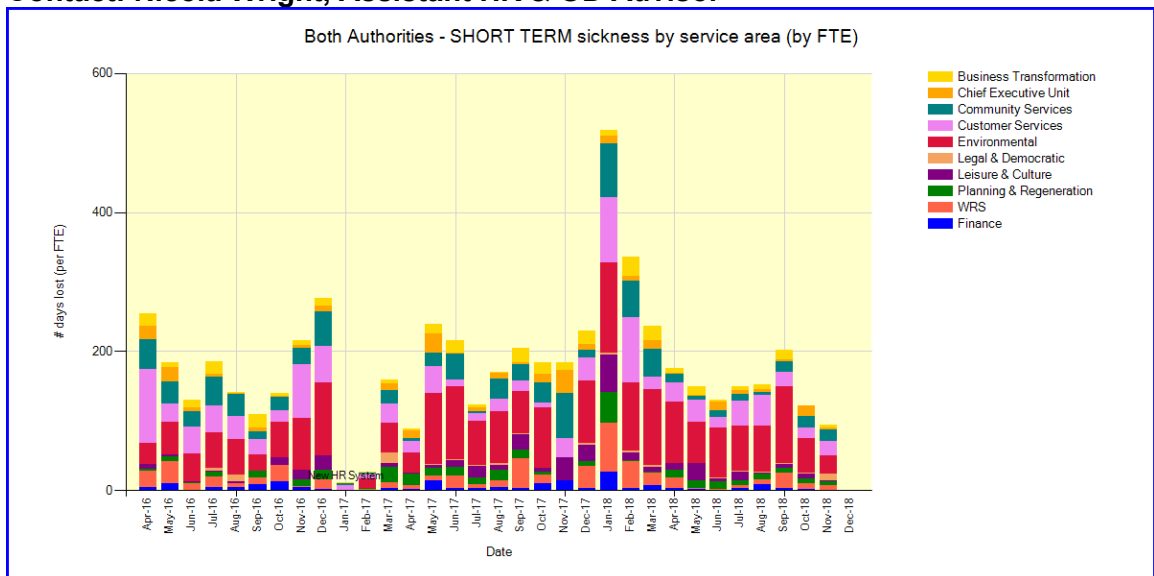
Short term sickness has remained fairly static since April 2018. The HR team continue to monitor and assist managers in tackling both types of sickness, as well as using the data to make informed interventions where required, such as review of sickness absence policy, occupational health services and the employee assistance programme.

Long Term Sickness Absence by service area (by FTE)
Contact: Nicola Wright, Assistant HR & OD Advisor



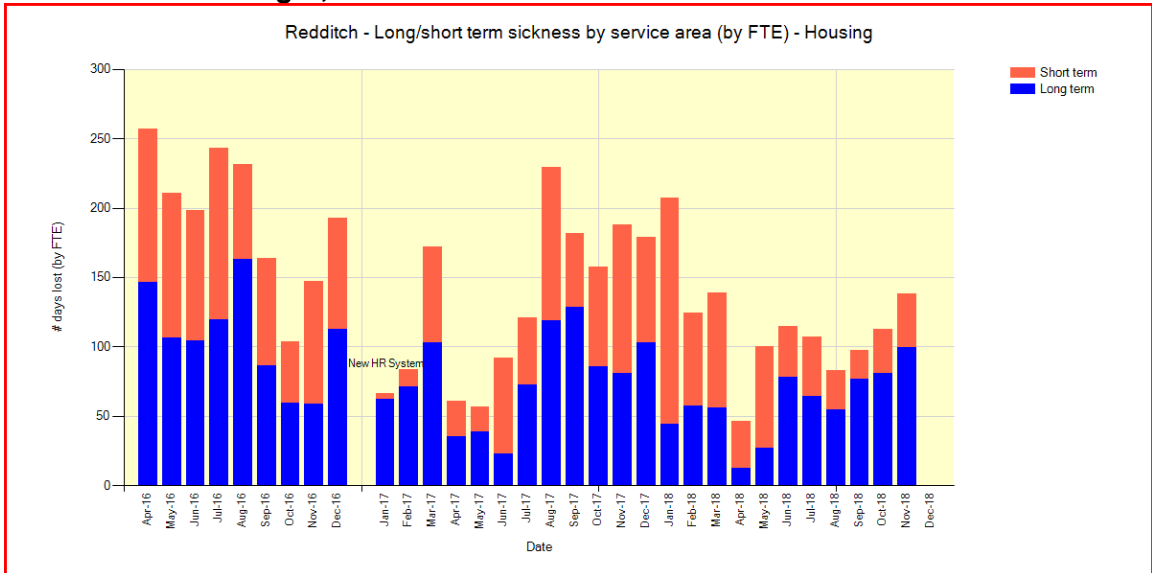
Long term absence has seen an increase over the last 2 months; increases have been experienced in Environmental Services, Customer Services, Planning and Regeneration and Business Transformation.

Short Term Sickness Absence by service area (by FTE)
Contact: Nicola Wright, Assistant HR & OD Advisor



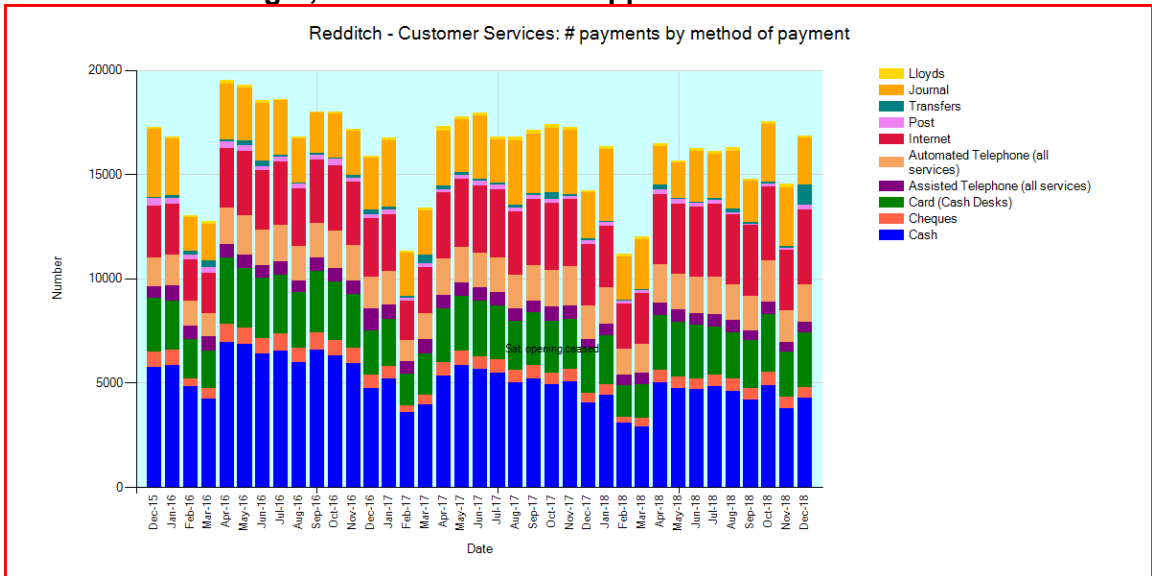
Short term absence has seen an overall decrease from the previous month; it is at the lowest level recorded in 2018.

Long/Short Term Sickness Absence by service area (by FTE) - Housing
Contact: Nicola Wright, Assistant HR & OD Advisor



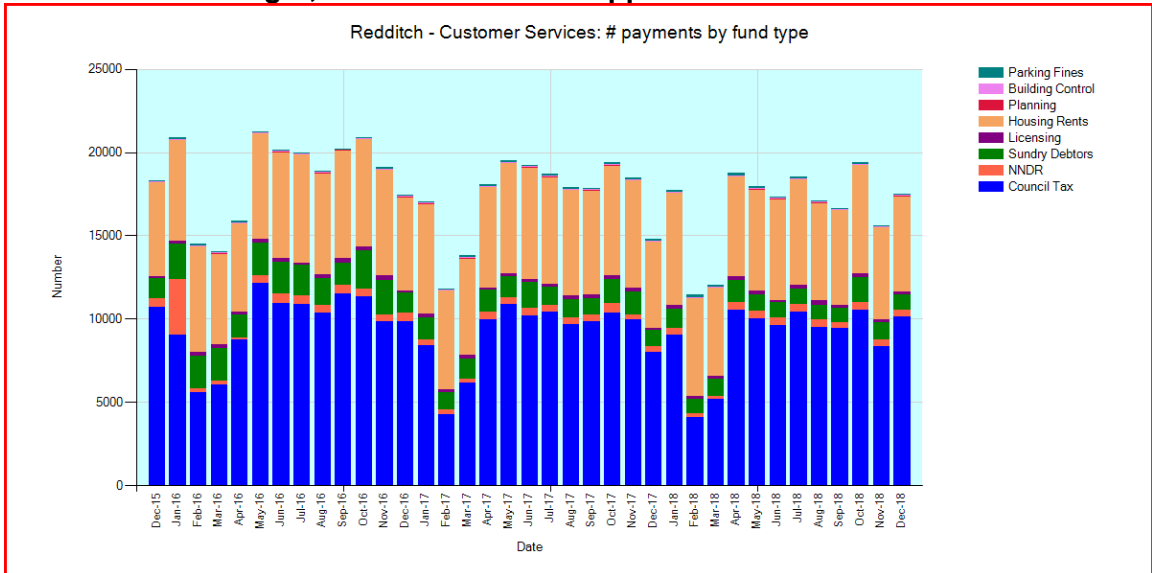
Due to a number of changes within Housing Management, HR are providing ongoing assistance in the monitoring and recording of sickness absence.

Customer Services: # payments by method of payment
Contact: Maria Wright, Senior Customer Support Officer



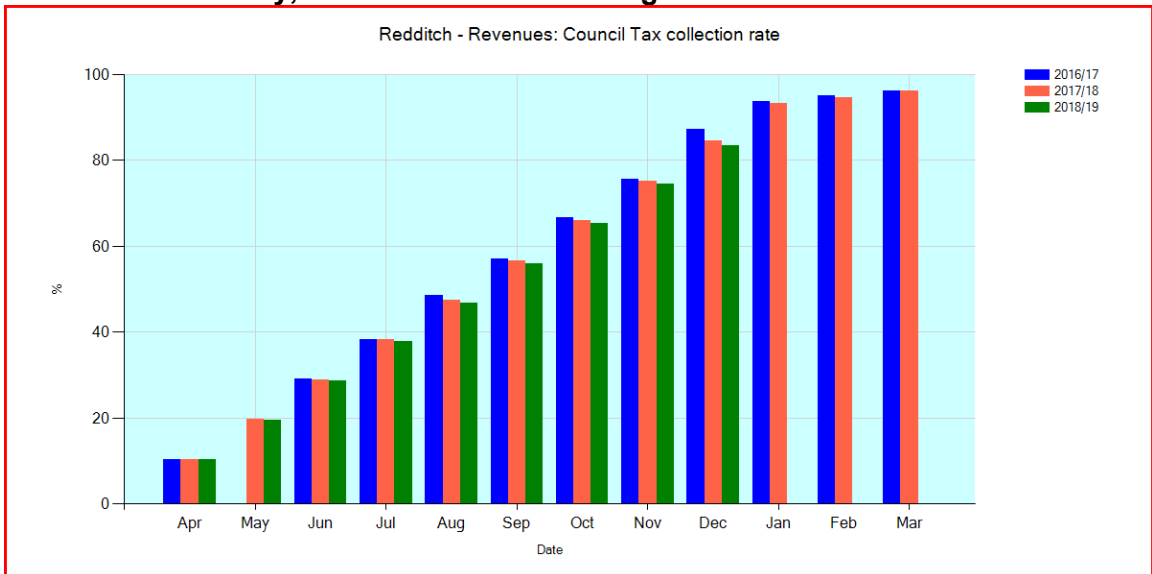
Payments by fund type remain largely unchanged; cash payments still remain the highest choice of method of payment for customers, followed by internet payments and card payments at the desk. Procurement is underway in Housing for a new system to allow Direct Debits to be set up for rent payments and Customer Support Officers are encouraging customers to take up Direct Debit as an alternative. There is also work ongoing with Housing to enable a refresh of payment cards so customers can make cash, card and cheque payments at PayPoint and Post Office locations. This should be in place by April 2019. Following that, work with Council Tax will be undertaken to see if it is feasible for the same provider to operate a barcoded billing system.

Customer Services: # payments by fund type
Contact: Maria Wright, Senior Customer Support Officer



Council Tax still remains the highest payment by fund followed by housing rents and sundry debtors. This measure provides information relating to the total number of payments made through all routes i.e. web pay system, online and face to face.

Revenues: Council Tax collection rate
Contact: David Riley, Revenue Services Manager

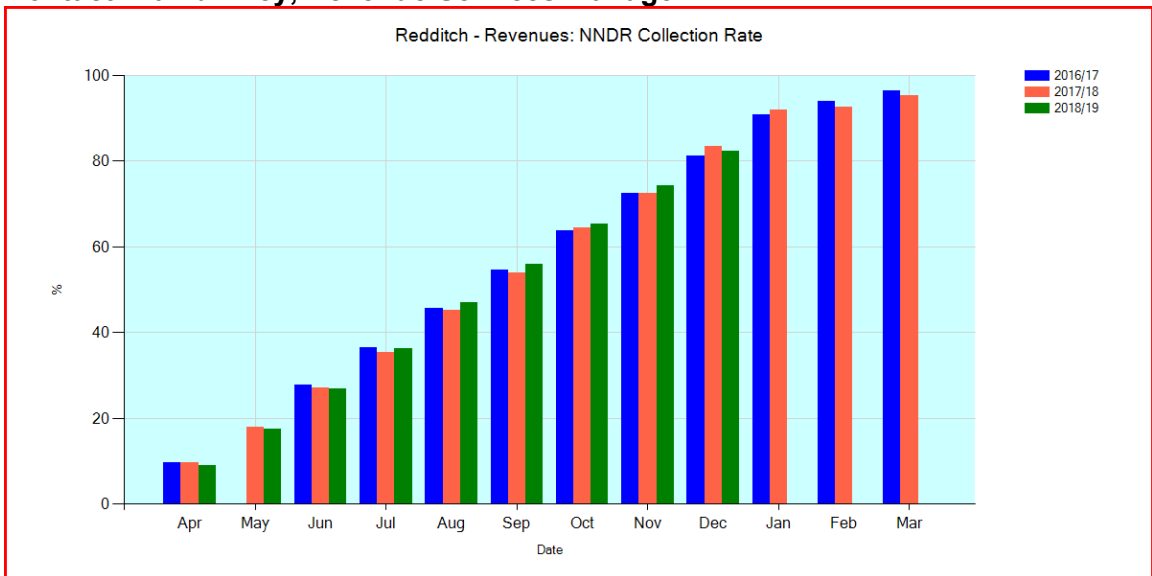


The end of year collection rates for 2016 and 2017 were broadly similar with an average of 96.16% of Council Tax collected. Measures have been set with the aim of collecting 97% of Council Tax within year.

When current performance is modelled against previous year's the collection rates the end of year figures are projected to be half one percentage point below target at 96%.

The timing of the issue of recovery documents are being reviewed for the final quarter of the year to ensure that timely reminders are issued to delinquent accounts and appropriate action is taken in respect of any outstanding balances. All team members have been provided with training in relation to debt recovery techniques so that target telephone intervention can be taken and appropriate actions are taken by team members to ensure payment of debts.

Revenues: NNDR collection rate
Contact: David Riley, Revenue Services Manager



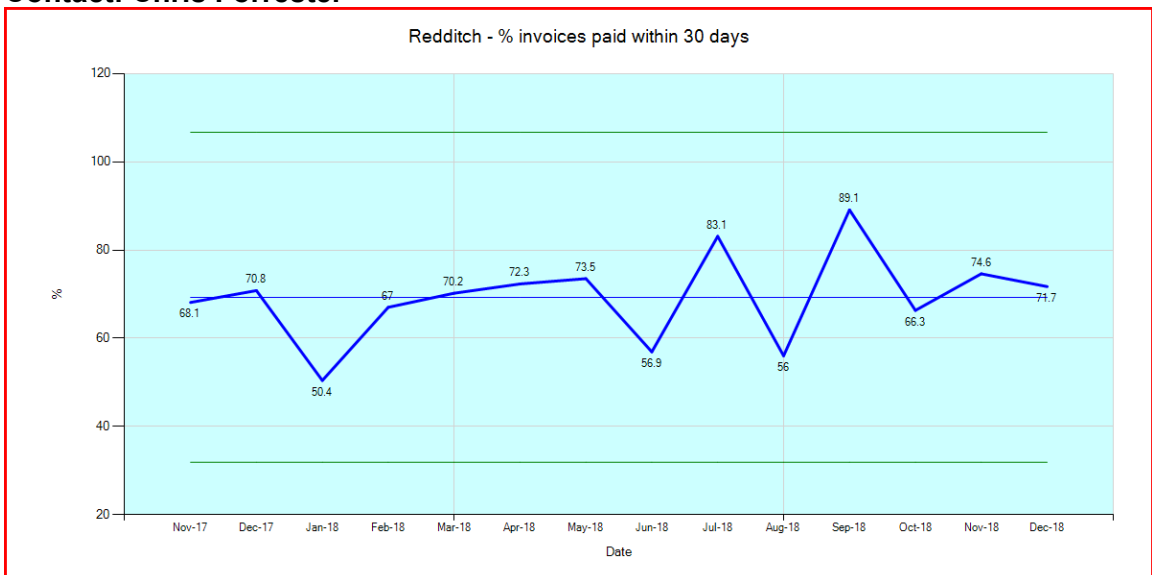
The end of year collection rates for 2016 and 2017 were 96.51% and 95.29% respectively. Measures have been set with the aim of collecting 98.5% of Non-Domestic Rates within year.

When current performance is modelled against previous years' the end of year collection rates are projected to be higher than in 2016 and 2017 but below the target of 98.5%; performance was 0.4% below target at the end of November and has slipped to 2.7% below target in December.

The reduction in performance is in part a result of increases in debit, delays in receiving payments from County Council, and increases in delinquent accounts.

In January 2019 action commenced to target telephone calls to delinquent accounts and the current collection performance is improving. During the final quarter of the year accounts with outstanding payments will be targeted for telephone recovery and reviewed on a weekly basis.

% invoices paid within 30 days
Contact: Chris Forrester



The drop in the figures since September are due to staff sickness, staff shortages and time spent on other prioritised projects, which has resulted in the team having a back log of work. We have been reviewing internal processes to determine how the figure can be improved. Due to current system limitations, a new member of staff will be hired through Matrix to increase support and it is expected this figure will improve as a result.