

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT: 'HELP ME TO RUN A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS' – MAY 2019

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This bi-monthly report highlights the key areas for the strategic purpose 'Help me to run a successful business'.
- 1.2 The key sickness absence measures are contained in this report.

2. CONTEXT

NWedR are in the process of preparing an Economic Growth Strategy for North Worcestershire, which will include engagement with key stakeholders over the next two-three months. The strategy is expected to be presented to the council for approval in September 2019.

2.1 Enhancing the retail, leisure and residential offer

A new Redditch Regeneration Plan was developed in 2018.

In recognition of the need to secure new investment, and regeneration, local public and private sector partners have created a Quarters plan for the town centre's future development, building on its residual strengths and on the collective will to deliver positive change.

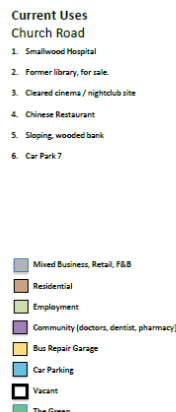
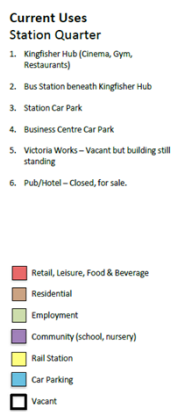
'Four Quarters'

The focus for activity is centred on four regeneration quarters:

- 1. Station and Residential
- 2. Education and Enterprise
- 3. Retail and Leisure – Kingfisher Centre and surrounds
- 4. Public Sector & Cultural Quarter

At the heart of these quarters is the old town, anchored by the church and its surrounds. Linking the quarters together will be the new place making strategy which will consider connectivity, design and integration of these quarters.

New Residential & Railway Quarter



The above sites Station area and Church Rd make up the new residential quarter and provide the most significant opportunity to provide new residential accommodation into the town centre. The council has appointed consultants to develop masterplan options supported by a high level viability appraisal with a final preferred option to be approved by May 2019.

Bringing in circa 600 new residential units, commercial office space/convenience retailing and café pavilion seeks to address a number of challenges to increase footfall, natural surveillance and increased dwell time. Enhanced pedestrian links provide improved connectivity with the Kingfisher Shopping Centre and Unicorn Hill. This quarter would require significant investment for land acquisition and assembly and changes to physical infrastructure

Education and Enterprise Quarter

The release of the existing police station and related onsite parking is a site that could be redeveloped to create incubator units to support new businesses and improve links between businesses and HOW College. Initial dialogue with Worcestershire LEP has indicated the potential for this site being used for Betaden North – a dynamic launch pad for tech entrepreneurs. The existing Betaden located in the south of Worcestershire has access to a 5G test bed and this could be replicated in this enterprise quarter.

Retail and Leisure Quarter

Focus on Improving the Town Centre retail and leisure offer and dwell time. The Council is supporting the existing retailers and the wider business community in the creation of a business improvement district (BID), which could raise funds for consolidating and promoting the town centre. The process of developing a BID presents opportunities to promote the town centre retail offer and to communicate with the wider stakeholder community our plans and the integrated investment strategy.

Public Sector & Culture Quarter

The consideration of a shared hub for public services was a component of earlier town centre studies – One Public Estate Review. The Council and its public sector partners recognise the opportunity to enhance their position by consolidating public services, including those currently delivered outside the centre, within a new community services ‘hub’. Consultants have been appointed to look at the feasibility of the hub and proposed location to inform an outline business case. The services that could be collocated in the proposed Hub include library, health, town hall and job centre agencies.

The library facility, in addition to other users who have shown an interest in the hub, equate to 50,000sqf of additional floor space as well as 46,000sqf of council services. Demolition of the library and relocation in the community hub would provide the opportunity for a potential new plaza and events space supported by Kingfisher Shopping Centre units and new frontage addressing the comments received in public consultation.

A Project Board, chaired by the Council’s Chief Executive, will be set-up to oversee the delivery of this vision and will include representatives of key stakeholders.

The delivery of the council’s ambitious vision will be led by the North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration (NWEDR) team, a shared service between the Bromsgrove, Redditch and Wyre Forest Councils NWEDR is a multidisciplinary team with a wealth of specialist experience and knowledge in and proven track record of developing and delivering multimillion pound regeneration, economic development and business support projects across North Worcestershire.

The team has the capacity to lead the development of a full bid to the next stage, although external support will be needed in areas like building design, cost appraisal, development appraisal.

An expression of interest was submitted to government as part of their Future High Streets Fund programme; a response is expected during the summer 2019. The Expression of Interest captures is based on the Four Quarters Vision outlined above and focuses on implementing key structural changes that will strengthen Redditch's town centre viability, vibrancy, attractiveness and competitiveness

Matchborough and Winyates District Centres Regeneration

The former New Town District Centres in Redditch Borough were identified in the adopted Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.4 as being in need of regeneration. The Council has already regenerated Church Hill District Centre and is now focussing on the District Centres in Matchborough and Winyates. Both District Centres offer the potential to regenerate dated layouts and design, whilst maximising opportunities to positively enhance local services and facilities. Regeneration of the District Centres would benefit any potential new investors and occupiers as well as every day users, whilst enhancing the built and natural environments and changing perceptions of these locations as valued community hubs.

The current issue is to understand the feasibility and deliverability of potential regeneration options, which meet the needs of District Centre users and the Council alike. A comprehensive approach to regeneration incorporating under-used land in the vicinity of the District Centres could create a substantial number of new homes as well as new commercial provision, enhanced local amenities and community benefits. Once the Council understands the feasibility of potential regeneration options, public consultation will be undertaken to help develop a preferred regeneration scheme.

2.2 Nurture existing businesses and encourage a future generation of entrepreneurs

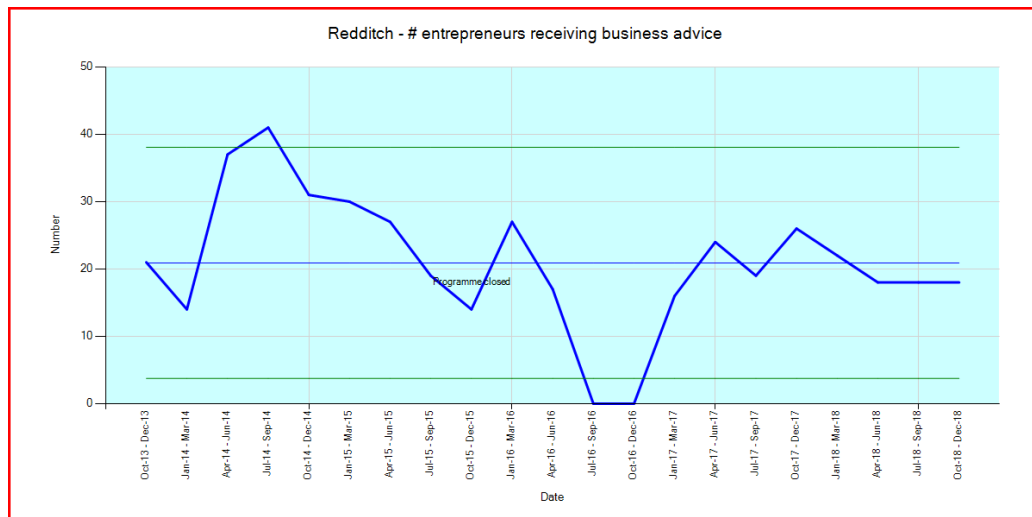
In order to nurture existing businesses in the district, the NWEDR has promoted a range of grant funding opportunities to small businesses as well as multiple workshops for business support. The Enterprising Worcestershire Grant has served to help young businesses fund equipment; machinery, website construction, consultancy work and software to aid early stage development. A range of workshops has also taught small businesses how to thrive, focussing on topics such as a Start-Up Masterclass, social media, franchising, strategic marketing, legal essentials and property law to name only a few.

More established businesses have also been encouraged to show their entrepreneurial nous, with the Worcestershire Proof of Concept grant offering up to £30,000 in matched funding for companies looking to develop new products or processes.

The programmes of support focus on helping the entrepreneur to acquire the skills required to run a successful, sustainable business. Topics covered include core competencies such as business planning, marketing, and financial & legal requirements. In addition topic specific workshops are available giving a more in depth study and these will often be provided in response to demand from would-be entrepreneurs. The programmes are delivered by Blue Orchid who was procured by Worcestershire County Council and Solihull MBC and who deliver multiple such programmes across the country. Participants in the programmes frequently have little experience running a business, are unlikely to know other entrepreneurs and usually do not have access to finance. As such they are higher risk and are less likely to survive or to grow beyond self-employment or micro-businesses.

The sample size for this period is too small to be statistically relevant. However, survival rates of those businesses that have accessed support over several years are, on average, better than the general population. This would indicate that the schemes are having a positive impact on the businesses.

Entrepreneurs receiving business advice

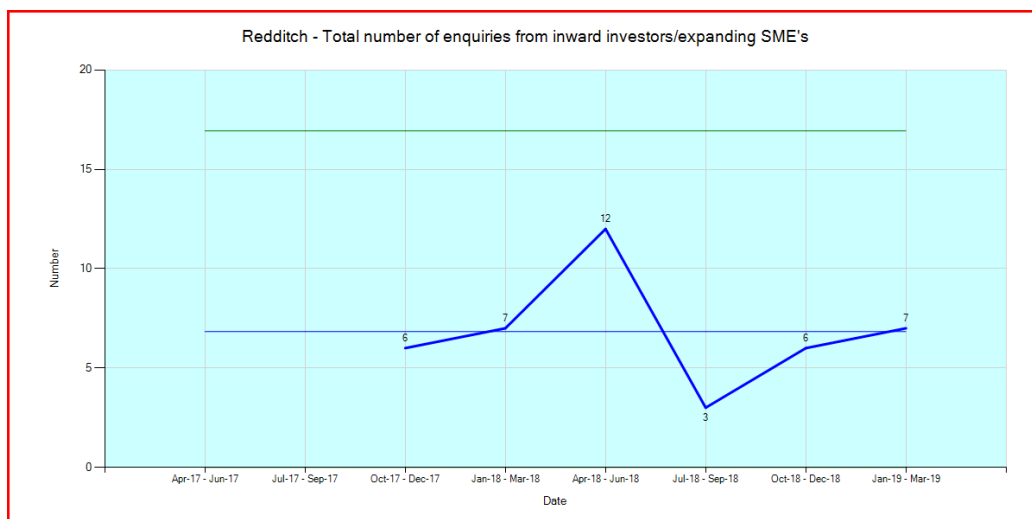


Oct 18 - Dec 18 – An analysis of participants in the start-up programmes indicate 61% are sole traders. Participants are planning to start businesses predominantly in the community, social and personal services sector. This is followed by the digital, creative and information services sector and then the business services sector.

Supporting business start-ups is a numbers game and the aim is to get as many participants as possible. This is due to the low conversion rate. Typically 50% of enquirers will book on to the scheme. Of these, around 50% will attend the workshop. Less than 10% of participants go on to start a business and survival rates are about 60%. Therefore, to create 1 successful business you need to generate a lot of enquiries.

The scheme is promoted via many organisations – the national business helpline; the 2 growth hubs that serve Redditch; the County Council; NWedR; the support provider (Blue Orchid); and Solihull MBC. Each organisation has a range of channels including websites, social media, attendance at events; and marketing collateral.

Total number of enquiries from inward investors/expanding SME's



During the last quarter of 2018/19, enquiries were received from businesses in the retail, wholesale, manufacturing and business services sector.

The number of enquiries reflects the fact that other organisations lead on these areas, i.e. the LEPs for Inward Investment and the Growth Hubs for general business support. All government funded programmes must be promoted via a growth hub and so resources are put in to encourage business to contact them. Individual programmes are promoted by their managing organisations too. Therefore the local authority is not necessarily who businesses choose to contact when seeking assistance. Fortunately, we operate a “no wrong front door” policy and services are well integrated. Partnerships between the various providers are strong and businesses who seek help should be well served. This is evident by the number of businesses who re-engage after receiving support. The challenge is to reach the businesses that don't, for whatever reason, engage with public sector support.

2.3 Positively promote Redditch as a place to live, work, invest and visit and encourage new inward investment

NWedR is working with the West Midlands Growth Company to build on the Midlands UK success at MIPIM 2019, where the delegation had meetings concerning £11bn worth of projects. The Midlands UK delegation had meetings concerning £11 billion worth of projects and investment opportunities with 24,000 stakeholders from over 100 nations. Here the region was promoted alongside global cities such as London, Dubai and Paris, with the Midlands UK Pavilion providing a dedicated area to showcase future projects.

Discussions have started to undertake a PR and marketing campaign for the Town Centre, focusing on the perception of Redditch. This is currently on hold until the decision regarding the BID has been made, as this would be a key piece of work for that new group were it to be established.

2.4 Work with partners to improve the aspirations of our younger population and develop skills to meet the future demands of employers

Following research by Sir John Holman into career guidance for young people, eight ‘Gatsby Benchmarks’ were recommended in order to better prepare the nation’s future workforce for employment. In Redditch the NWEDR alongside the GBSLEP and has partnered with schools and businesses to create the Opening Doors for business programme. The scheme is now operational across multiple schools, allowing young people to interact with employers through short term visits to their company’s premises, experiencing the workplace and higher education.

In addition, the NWEDR has been a sponsor of the Young Enterprise Finals, with NWEDR’s Jane Doyle acting as a judge. The annual Skills show at Chateau Impney also gave school leavers and sixth formers in Redditch and the surrounding area the opportunity to engage with the world of work. Through interactive stands students could gain knowledge on career pathways and employability, with the NWEDR team volunteering at the event which was organised by Worcestershire County Council. With total of over 5,000 pupils from 43 schools and colleges the event proved a great way to inspire the next cohort of workers for the employment needs of the future.

3. **KEY SICKNESS ABSENCE MEASURES**

3.1 Sickness Data

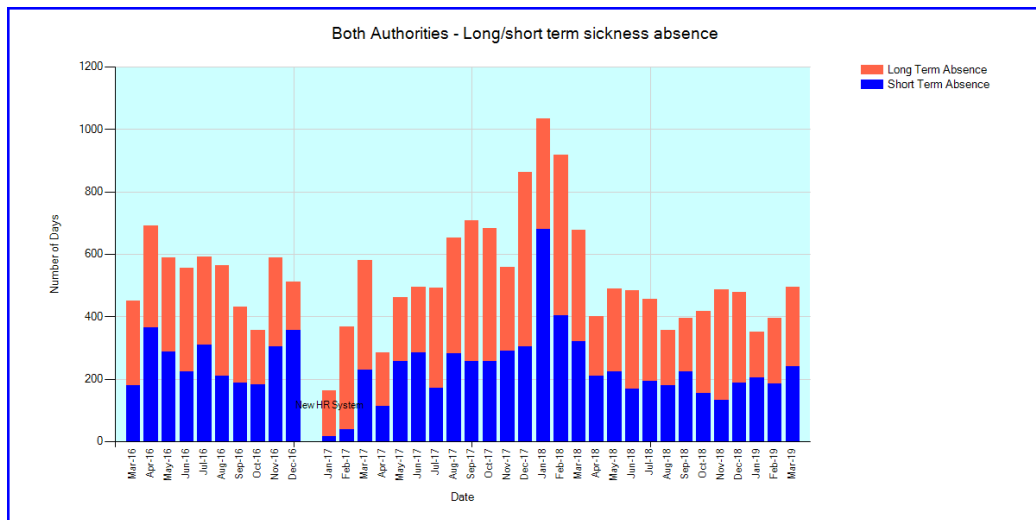
Sickness outturn for 2018/19 was considerably lower than previous years at 6.75 days per FTE. There has been an investment in further one to one training on the HR21 system with Managers. The system has also been developed to include the recording of return to work data, based upon research that proves holding return to work interviews significantly reduces sickness absence.

During 2018 HR launched a suite of HR Management Information; this was launched via the Managers Forum, where instruction on how to use the information was discussed. The data is delivered on a monthly basis to the 4th tier managers and includes sickness and return to work interviews amongst other HR data; this may have assisted Heads of Service and 4th tier managers in seeing the ‘bigger picture’ of sickness across the area, rather than just the sickness for their direct reports. HR have started trialling ‘Managers toolkit training’ which involves training for managers on workplace issues/ policies etc. This has included training on sickness absence and setting targets, this was well received and will continue to be developed and rolled out over 2019/20.

Further work has continued with the development of the sickness absence policy, this has included further policy working groups engaging management, employees, HR and trade unions, collectively this work has helped further inform the sickness policy and brought to the forefront the issue of sickness. Sickness absence closely correlates with the use of agency staff in some areas such as frontline services. The agency spend last year has probably attributed to more scrutiny and better management of sickness in front line services.

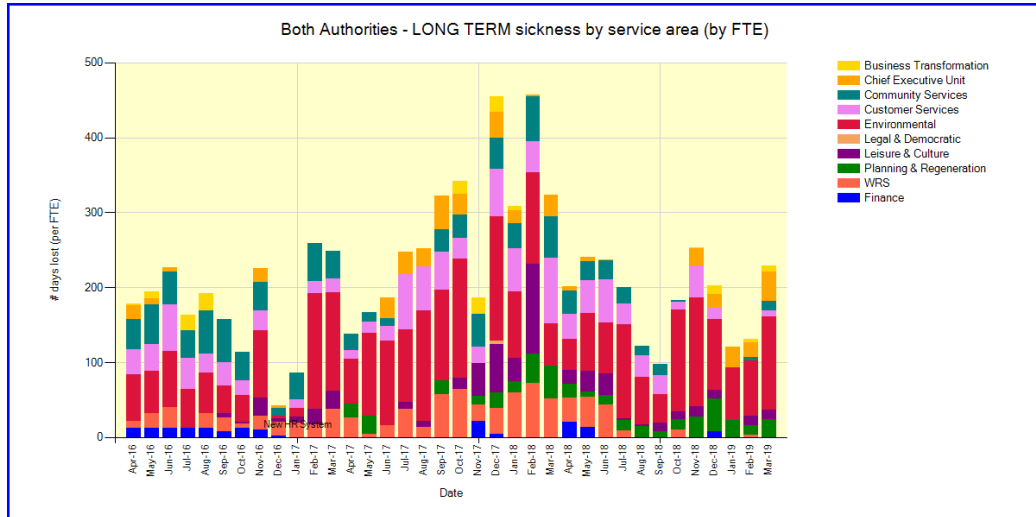
The council has reduced sickness throughout 2018/19, but will continue to work to further reduce sickness in the future. This will include the implementation of the sickness absence policy, the implementation of a new enterprise system covering HR and Payroll and further Managers toolkit training.

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



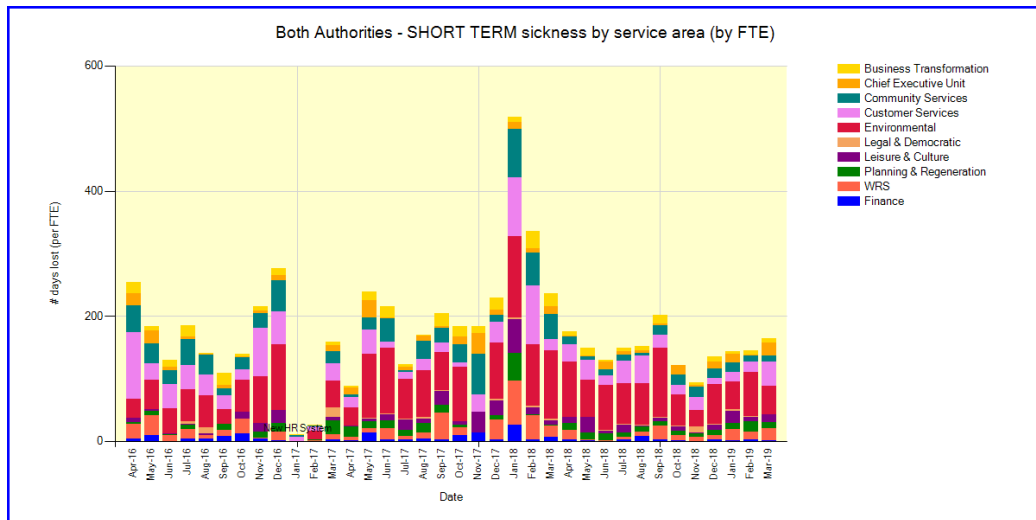
Although there have been minor peaks, in the main, sickness absence has remained fairly static since April 2018. The HR team continue to monitor and assist managers in tackling both types of sickness, as well as using the data to make informed interventions where required, such as review of sickness 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



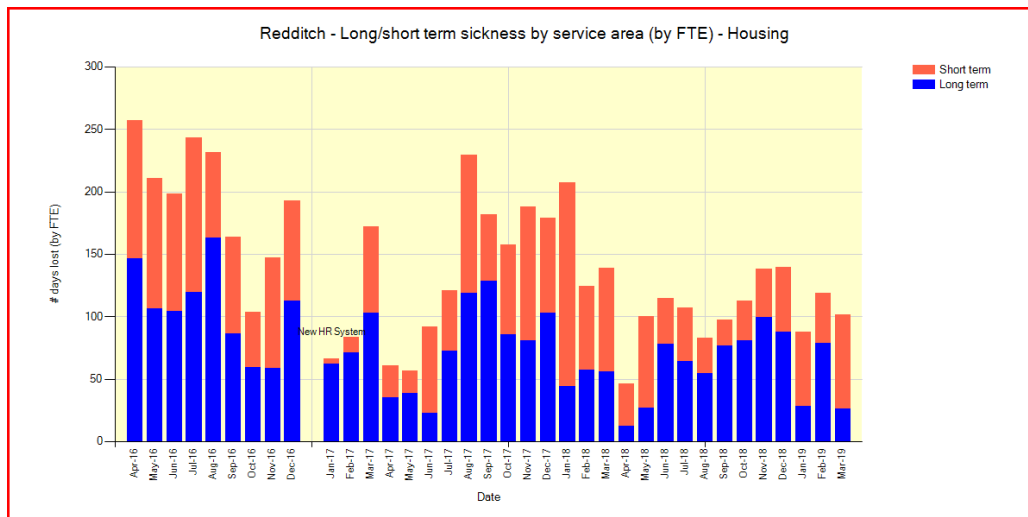
Long term absence has seen a steady increase during the first quarter of 2019; increases have been experienced in Environmental Services, Customer Services, Community Services and Chief Executive Unit.

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



Short term absence has steadily increased since November 2018; Customer Services saw the highest increase of all service areas during March 2019.

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



Overall during 2018 sickness absence has been lowered compared to 2017 and 2016. The amount of short term sickness in 2018 has not significantly changed; if you compare March 2017 to March 2018 and March 2019, the level of short term sickness is comparable. However, the long term sickness for each of these months has decreased. Sickness absence is now being closely managed and monitored across the whole of the housing services.