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Bae Abertawe
Swansea Bay University
Health Board



Meeting Date	09 August 2022	Agenda Item	2.1
Report Title	Long Term Covid Update		
Report Author(s)	Ruth George, Associate Head of Operational HR and Business Partnering		
Report Sponsor	Debbie Eytayo, Director of Workforce and OD		
Presented by	Debbie Eytayo, Director of Workforce and OD		
Freedom of Information	Open		
Purpose of the Report	To provide an update on the number of individuals currently absent from work with Long Covid in Swansea Bay University Health Board (SBUHB) and the management guidance for supporting employees to return to work.		
Key Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 153 Long Covid cases of more than 28 days absence as at 18 July 2022. • 9 will be approaching half pay status shortly and 5 are now receiving half pay for their Long Term Covid sickness absence. • Welsh Government guidance from 1 July 2022 and the management guidance developed to support employees to return to work following Long Covid absence. • Additional support workforce are providing to managers and employees with Long Covid. 		
Specific Action Required <i>(please choose one only)</i>	Information	Discussion	Assurance
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Recommendations	Members are asked to: RECEIVE the update contained in this paper		

Swansea Bay University Health Board

Long Term Covid Update

1. Current Position

SBUHB currently have 153 employees reported absent from work as at 18 July 2022, due to Long Term Covid. The breakdown for each service group/service is listed in table 1 below;

Table 1 (Data Source ESR)

Service Group/Directorate	Headcount
130 Chief Operating Officer - Dir	22
130 Other Corporate	11
130 MH & LD Service Group - Dir	5
130 Morriston Service Group - Dir	43
130 NPTS Service Group – Dir	43
130 Primary Care & Community Service Group - Dir	29
Grand Total	153

Out of the 153 cases, 9 will be approaching half pay status shortly and 5 are now receiving half pay for their Long Term Covid sickness absence.

2. Long Term Covid Management Guidance

Welsh Government guidance was issued on 29 June 2022, for the arrangements for the management of Covid sickness absence which came into place from 1st July 2022. Please find the full guidance in the appendices section of this report.

These arrangements were developed in partnership with the Welsh Partnership Forum Business Committee and support the transition from the specific Covid sickness absence arrangements which have been in place since March 2020 to the national terms and conditions.

From 1 July 2022, the management of Covid-19 sickness absence changed to bring it into line with the latest Welsh Government guidance and the arrangements as set out in the All Wales Managing Attendance at Work (MAAW) Policy.

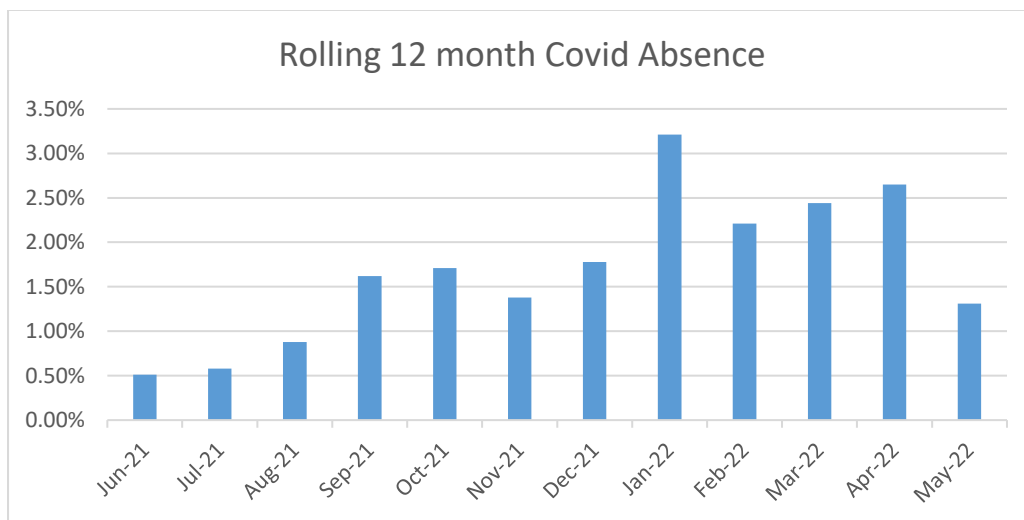
In addition to the enhanced provisions, and to assist staff to return to the workplace following a lengthy period of Covid-19 related sickness absence, a programme of specific support has been put in place.

To support this approach, guidance for managers to support employees on a long term absence with Covid-19, including a detailed section on phased returns, has been developed in partnership on an all Wales basis and is available in the link below;

3. Overall COVID Absence

The rolling COVID absence for both short and long term is demonstrated in chart 1 below;

Chart 1 (Data source ESR)



At the peak of the first wave of the Covid pandemic in April 2020, 2.68% of the monthly absence was attributable to Covid reasons. There was a further surge in Covid related absence in January 2022, with 3.21% reported as due to Covid reasons.

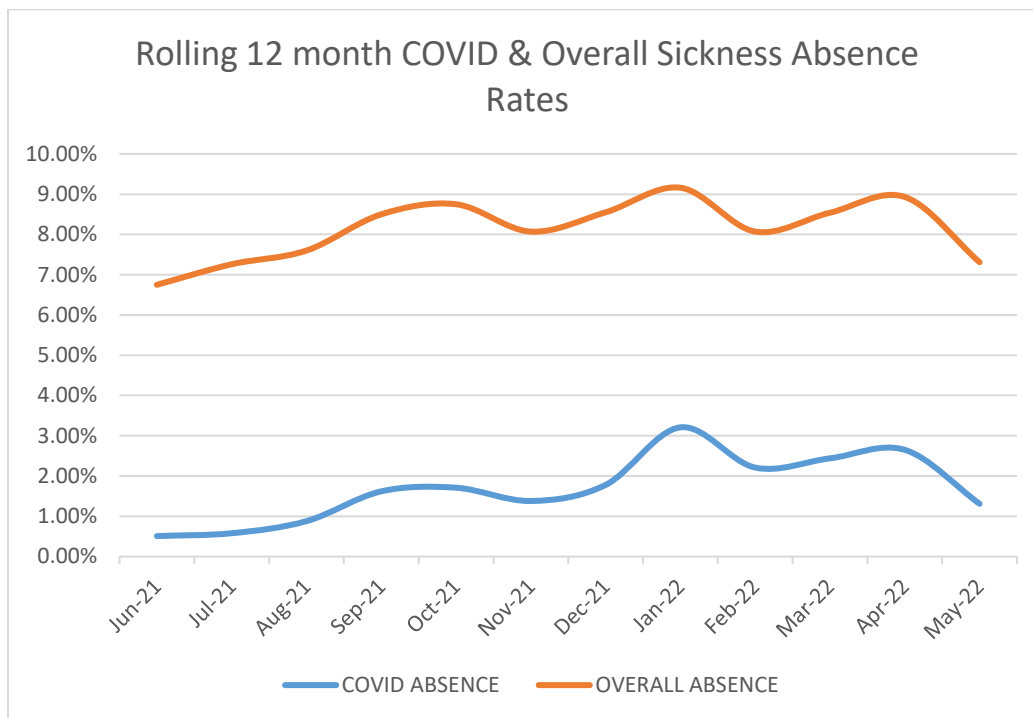
The data highlights the fluctuating position regarding the surges of Covid absence. January to April 2022 were the highest Covid related reported absences during the rolling 12 month period, with June to July 2021 reporting the lowest Covid related absences.

Although the ESR data is currently not available, the daily reported Covid absences have reported a further surge in June and July 2022. It is therefore difficult to compare the data with the previous 12 months, due to the unpredictable surges of Covid absence.

4. Covid Absence and Overall Sickness Absence

The rolling 12 month Covid absence compared to the overall sickness absence rates is detailed in chart 2 below;

Chart 2 (Data source ESR)



The data highlights the impact on Covid absence on the overall sickness rates within SBUHB, with the highest overall in month sickness absence rate of 9.16% in January 2022.

If we discount Covid related reasons from January’s overall absence performance we see an absence percentage of 5.95% for the month.

This however does not provide a full picture of the effect of Covid 19 on our attendance performance, particularly the psychological effect on our workforce. Stress/ anxiety / depression / other psychiatric illnesses are consistently within the top 3 reasons for absence within SBUHB, despite the range of well-being initiatives that have been introduced since the start of the pandemic and available to all employees within the Health Board. The Occupational Health service does provide a Long Covid Clinic for staff.

5. On-going Actions

In addition to the Welsh Government guidance, Workforce and OD are providing a number of on-going interventions to support managers and employees with Long Term Covid absence.

Examples of support currently in place is as follows:

- On-going review of Long Term Covid absences in line with the Welsh Government Risk Assessment Tool and the ceasing of full pay for Long Term Covid Sick in June.
- On-going review and support to clinically vulnerable employees to support their return to work as soon as possible in line with the Welsh Government Risk Assessment Tool and advice.
- Occupational Health support for staff with Long Covid to continue.
- Close partnering between HR BP team and Operational HR colleagues to provide targeted absence management training / appropriate coaching for managers / improvement plan.

- All service groups now have a full action plan which focuses on rolling hot spots with targeted approach to improve performance and a heavy focus on well-being, as well as ensuring cases are managed accordingly to policy.
- Workforce support continues at monthly group roster review meetings focusing on staff unavailability, including overtime hours assigned, bank and agency, working time regulations and annual leave arrangements.
- A successful business case approved by the Health Board in March 2022 will support the Staff Wellbeing's increased service demand and will enable services developed and extended during the Covid-19 pandemic to continue; this includes the roll out of TRiM.
- Advice for managers and staff on Covid-19 exceptions to isolation to maximise attendance at work, and on underlying health conditions and pregnancy
- Planning to support the autumn rollout of the co-administered Covid-19 vaccine and staff flu vaccine.
- Improving access to Case Conferences to manage long term complex sickness absence.
- Promotion of & support in the delivery of 'Compassionate Circles' Mini-rounds across the Health Board (as developed by mental health colleagues)
- New Occupational Health and Wellbeing SharePoint site to communicate support available to staff
- Continuing to develop the network of 550+ Wellbeing Champions, supported by a regular programme of workshops.

6. Governance and Risks

Actions identified within this paper are in line and support the objectives of the all Wales Managing Attendance at Work policy, which has been through an equality impact assessment.

The risks of not taking appropriate actions to improve attendance at work include:


- Failure to maintain continued focus on Long Term Covid absence performance may lead to levels increasing.
- Direct effect on costs in terms of bank, agency and overtime.
- Increasing levels of sick absence increases pressure on those staff who remain at work.
- Levels of service change likely to affect health and wellbeing with most likely impact on mental health and stress related sickness.
- Adverse impact on patient care/service user outcomes

7. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications that are the group is being asked to approve for this paper.

8. Recommendation

The Workforce and OD Committee is asked to receive and note the content of this paper and to support the actions that have been taken in relation to supporting Long Term Covid sickness absence reduction across the Health Board.

Link to Enabling Objectives <i>(please choose)</i>	Supporting better health and wellbeing by actively promoting and empowering people to live well in resilient communities	
	Partnerships for Improving Health and Wellbeing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Co-Production and Health Literacy	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Digitally Enabled Health and Wellbeing	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Deliver better care through excellent health and care services achieving the outcomes that matter most to people	
	Best Value Outcomes and High Quality Care	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Partnerships for Care	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Excellent Staff	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Digitally Enabled Care	<input type="checkbox"/>
Outstanding Research, Innovation, Education and Learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Health and Care Standards		
<i>(please choose)</i>	Staying Healthy	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Safe Care	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Effective Care	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Dignified Care	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Timely Care	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Individual Care	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Staff and Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Quality, Safety and Patient Experience		
Plan detailed in report comply with the MAAW policy principles and incorporate the “Healthier Wales Quadruple Aim” outlined in policy. All proposed actions are objectified to enhance the health and wellbeing of Swansea Bay staff and promote attendance at work.		
Financial Implications		
Absence due to Covid may require backfill for the period they are off which has a financial impact on the particular service area.		
Legal Implications (including equality and diversity assessment)		
Ensure compliance with GDPR Regulations and Equality Act 2010.		
Staffing Implications		
Additional supportive measure put in place for staff with effective communication applied.		
Long Term Implications (including the impact of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015)		
<p>Actions outlined in report promote “A Healthier Wales Quadruple Aim” these being:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Improved population health & wellbeing ○ Better quality & more accessible health & social care services ○ Motivated & sustainable health & social care workforce 		
Report History	N/A	
Appendices	<div style="text-align: center;">  NHS Wales COVID-19 Sickness / </div>	

