



Continuation of Business Continuity Plan – People Strategy - Coronavirus Pandemic

Committee Personnel

Date of meeting 30 April 2021

Date of report 14 April 2021

Report by Assistant Chief Executive

1. Object of report

To advise members on the continuation of SPT's business continuity plan, specifically related to our employees, during the coronavirus pandemic.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Personnel Committee noted SPT's Implementation of Business Continuity Plan – People Strategy – Coronavirus Pandemic at the meeting on 21 August 2020. This report is to give an update as the pandemic continued for the remainder of 2020, varying government restrictions and responses, and into 2021.
- 2.2 In Scotland the First Minister has announced a gradual easing of restrictions which started on 22 February 2021 with early learning, childcare and schools reopening for Primary 1 to 3, with the second phase on 15 March 2021, third phase on 5 April 2021 and a return to geographical variable levels from 26 April 2021 (to be confirmed at the time of writing).

3. Actions

- 3.1 SPT continues to be guided by the decisions being taken by the Government. As a public service, SPT remains committed to staying as operational as possible during the coronavirus pandemic, but critical to this was the protection of our staff and passengers.
- 3.2 The requirement for our services continued to be monitored with regular dialogue between SPT and Transport Scotland to review the arrangements.
- 3.3 All operational/customer-facing staff remained at work to support the continuity of public transport services for key workers across the Strathclyde area.
- 3.4 Social distancing, hygiene and cross-contamination prevention measures were implemented at all SPT locations where staff remained at work. All risk assessments continued to be reviewed dynamically to reflect the changing position throughout the period.
- 3.5 All employees were legally obliged to wear a face covering in the workplace from 19 October 2020. This included communal areas in workplaces, where people congregate or gather to, for example, socialise or transit such as passageways, stairs, lifts, staff rooms, training rooms, changing rooms and entrances. SPT ensured that this was implemented and additional signage was displayed at all of our premises.

- 3.6 All non-operational/customer-facing staff continued to work from home and were provided with the appropriate digital kit to support home working.
- 3.7 The Business Continuity Group initially met on a daily basis however, this was reviewed and met on at least a weekly basis, or more frequently when required to provide updates on each of their functional areas and to continue to review all arrangements in relation to SPT employees and key stakeholders.
- 3.8 The Subway Operations Senior Team continued to meet on a daily basis to provide updates on each of their functional areas, and other operational teams in bus and bus stations continued to have daily focus on service levels and to continue to review all arrangements in relation to SPT employees and key stakeholders.
- 3.9 The Strategy Group met as a minimum on a weekly basis, following the Business Continuity Group meeting, to continue to review all arrangements.

4. Continuation of Business Continuity Plan – People Strategy

- 4.1 All business support functions continued to work from home and were provided with the appropriate digital kit. In addition, customer services including MyBus Contact Centre, the Travel Card Unit and Ticketing Team were relocated initially to home working with some disruption to the services offered. At the time of writing a more blended operational model for this group has been implemented to reduce the risk of service backlogs accumulating.
- 4.2 Managers were issued with guidance about how to support their teams and ensure their health and wellbeing while working from home.
- 4.3 Guidance was issued to all staff working from home including what they should do to stay mentally and physically active during this period. Like many organisations staff will have faced many different challenges from this changed working arrangement and SPT provided advice on how best to deal with it.
- 4.4 All operational/customer-facing staff remained at work to support the continuity of public transport services for key workers across the Strathclyde area.
- 4.5 As part of the reinforced measures to stem the spread of the coronavirus pandemic, all operational/customer-facing staff were issued with “key worker” letters in line with Government guidance to allow them to travel to and from their place of work to allow SPT to continue to plan, co-ordinate and deliver public transport in the Strathclyde area.
- 4.6 Measures were put in place to protect our operational/customer-facing staff including:
 - The provision of additional personal protective equipment (gloves, hand sanitizer and masks, where appropriate).
 - The continuous review of shifts and working hours.
 - A reduction in working hours whilst continuing to meet our operational requirements and to ensure social distancing was adhered to.
- 4.7 Acknowledging that the coronavirus and lockdown may place heightened anxiety and stress on employee mental wellbeing and that some employees may need additional support SPT ensured that the Employee Assistance Programme - Validium remained accessible to all staff either by telephone or through their website forum VClub.

In addition, a number of our employees suffered bereavement during this period with support offered through our Employee Assistance Programme Validium.

- 4.8 During the coronavirus pandemic the UK Government issued an amendment to the Working Time Regulations (1988) to include the Working Time Regulations (Coronavirus) (Amendment Regulations) (2020). This amendment allowed an employee to carry forward up to 20 days annual leave into the next two leave years 2021 and 2022 where they were unable to take annual leave due to the coronavirus pandemic and the demands of their role.

SPT identified “key workers” who continued to provide operational/customer-facing services. The Subway Operations staffs’ annual leave is rostered in spring, summer and winter blocks. The annual leave of all other groups was managed, fairly, equitably and reasonably, with all staff required to book or take a statutory proportion of their annual leave entitlement during the lockdown period in line with our terms and conditions. SPT considered that it was reasonably practical for all employees to take a period of annual leave.

SPT recognised that it was important for all staff whether in operational/customer-facing roles or working from home to take a break from delivering services. Taking annual leave was a key element in ensuring that SPT committed to its duty of care to all employees ensuring they maintained good health and wellbeing. SPT did not anticipate that there would be a need for any staff to arrange to carry forward their annual leave into 2021 and 2022.

SPT also recognised that the management of annual leave would support a return to normal service and allow SPT to operate effectively as the lockdown was eased.

- 4.9 The Committee report in August 2020 advised that during the lockdown phase our staff availability remained stable with the numbers impacted by coronavirus from 13 March 2020 until implementation of the Covid-19 Route Map Phase 3 on 9 July 2020 as follows:

No. of Employees	Status	Percentage of Workforce
8	Shielding – 1 April to 31 July	1.6%
105	Returned to Work	21.4%
113	Total Impacted	23%

SPT’s staff availability remained stable until early November when SPT faced a challenge due to the numbers of staff being identified as close contacts by Test & Protect. However; SPT continued to provide essential transport services.

The numbers impacted by coronavirus as at 12 April 2021 were as follows:

No. of Employees	Status	Percentage of Workforce
7	Self-Isolating/Shielding/Long Term Sick	1.5%
419	Returned to Work	89.5%
426	Total Impacted	91%

There have been 426 instances of self-isolation, 276 employees have self-isolated once, 98 employees have self-isolated twice, 34 employees have self-isolated three times, 13 have self-isolated four times, 4 employees have self-isolated five times and 1 employee has self-isolated 6 times.

Isolations recorded were split into 6 categories as detailed below. Shielding was reintroduced on 5 January 2021 which resulted in 6 employees shielding until 26 April 2021. A total of 166 SPT employees had symptoms which is 39% of the total instances recorded. 55 (12%) of the 426 employees who self-isolated returned a positive test. The remaining isolations 260 (61%) were associated with other categories.

Categories	Total Instances
Family member has symptoms	109
Has symptoms	166
Local Authority education letter	6
Quarantine – return from abroad	5
Shielding	31
Test & Protect Contact	109
Total	426

Of the 426 instances, female employees self-isolated on 111 (26%) and male employees self-isolated on 315 (74%) occasions.

The age ranges of employees who self-isolated were as follows:

Age Range	Total Isolations
20 to 29	47
30 to 39	103
40 to 49	122
50 to 59	123
60 to 69	28
70/Over	3
Total	426

4.10 The Committee report in August 2020 included sickness absence statistics prior to and during the lockdown phase from 2 February to 20 June 2020. SPT continued to monitor sickness absence and the statistics from 2 February 2020 to 31 March 2021 are compared at Appendices 1 and 2.

The August 2020 statistics showed that the majority of absence during Periods 13, 1 and 2 was related to Covid-19 whether self-isolating for 7 or 14 days or shielding. The initial spike in our absence rate from Period 12 to Period 1 began to fall in P2 and reduced further in P3 and P4.

SPT saw a slight increase in its absence rate in P5 with the majority of absence related to psychological followed by a slight decrease in P6 with the majority of absence related to self-isolating. SPT saw an increase in its absence rate in P7 with the majority of absence related to self-isolations. This coincided with the significant rise in Covid-19 cases across the country during September/October 2020.

The absence rate continued to increase in P8 and P9 but decreased in P10. In line with what happened across the country following the Christmas period SPT saw a significant

increase in staff testing positive for coronavirus which resulted in spikes and Test & Protect isolations. Long term absences for a variety of reasons, the spike in positive tests and self-isolations resulted in a significant increase in the absence rate to 10.3% in P11. The absence rate slightly decreased to 9% in P12 however; there was a significant decrease to 4.9% in P13.

The statistics also continue to evidence a reduction in the common reasons for absence such as psychological (including bereavement), cold and flu, sickness and diarrhoea and muscular skeletal as Covid-19 related absences increased. Staff working from home, perhaps working through symptoms they would normally have reported as sickness absence and following social distancing or under-reporting may be contributory factors.

SPT continued to be guided by decisions taken by Government and the majority of staff continued to work from home. The local restrictions implemented on 9 October 2020 due to the rapidly increasing number of positive coronavirus cases across the central belt advised individuals to “work from home if you can” and “avoid public transport unless it is absolutely necessary.”

The previous report outlined SPTs restart plans which still remain valid, and are reviewed regularly. These will be implemented as soon as it is safe to do so and in line with Government guidance. SPT are factoring in lessons learned to all restart plans.

5. Conclusions

SPT will continue to regularly review, test and monitor the effectiveness of the business continuity plan to ensure that any recommendations through lessons learned are implemented.

We will also ensure that our business continuity plan is reviewed and updated to ensure compliance with legislation and best practice.

6. Committee action

The Committee is recommended to note the contents of this report.

7. Consequences

Policy consequences	<i>None directly.</i>
Legal consequences	<i>None directly.</i>
Financial consequences	<i>None directly.</i>
Personnel consequences	<i>Working arrangements and sickness absence levels are an integral part of SPT's strategy to continue to deliver effective services within a constrained budget. These were continually monitored.</i>
Equalities consequences	<i>Full consideration of key staff groups impacted by Covid-19 including shielding, underlying health conditions, pregnant workers, over 70s and black and ethnic minority staff.</i>
Risk consequences	<i>Workplace Covid-19 risk assessments were compiled by SPT's Health & Safety function in consultation with our Trade Union Representatives.</i>

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For further information, please contact *Valerie Davidson, Assistant Chief Executive*, on 0141-333 3298.

APPENDIX

TABLE 1

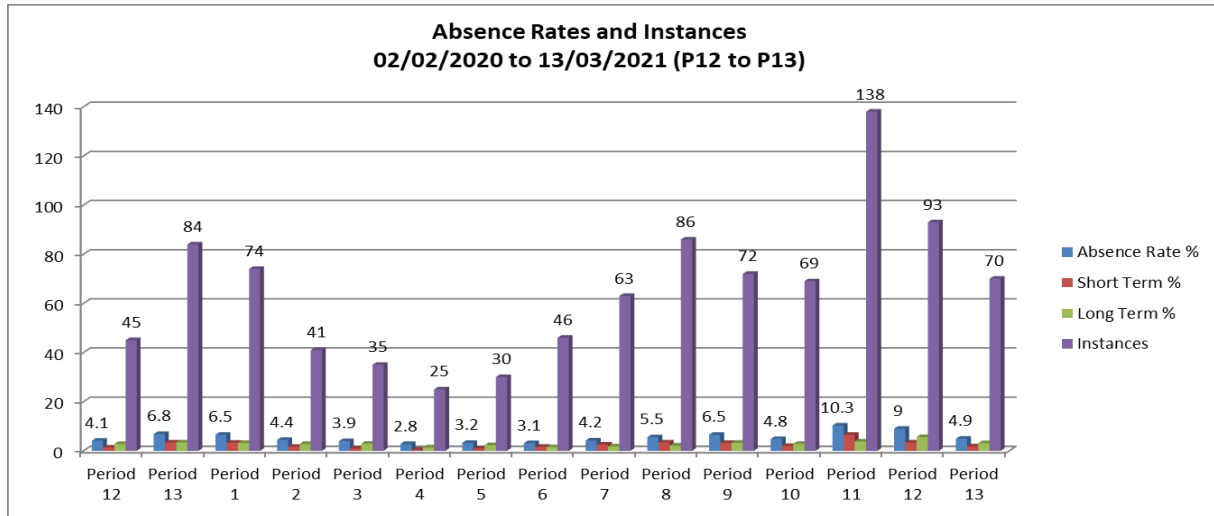


TABLE 2

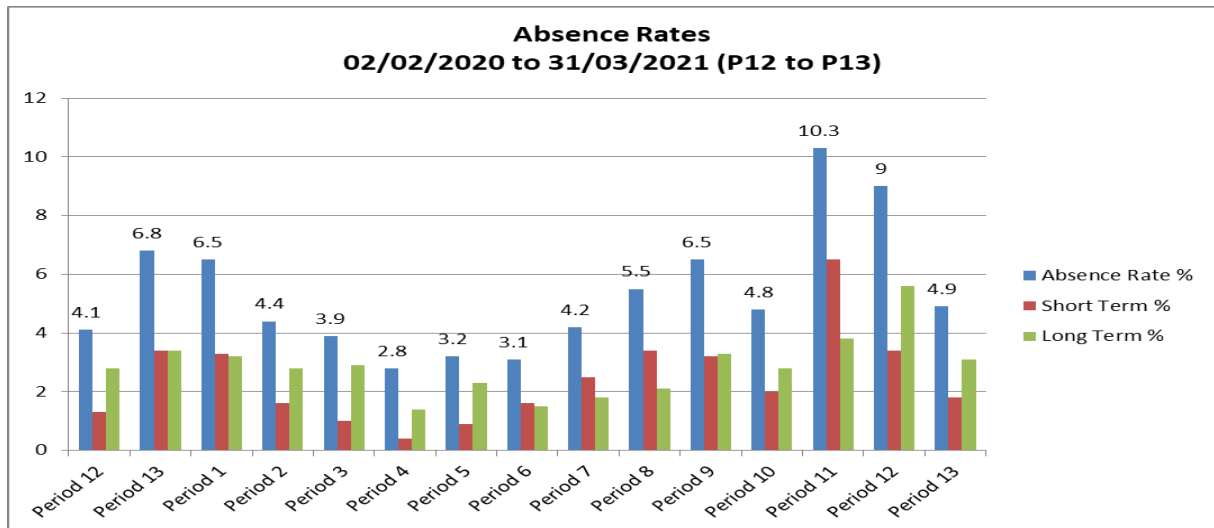


TABLE 3

