

REPORT

To: PERSONNEL SERVICES COMMITTEE	Subject: ABSENCE MANAGEMENT POLICY - MONITORING	
From: HEAD OF PERSONNEL SERVICES		
Date: 20 August 1998	Ref: AB/MB	

Introduction

The Absence Management Policy approved by Committee on 28 January 1998 contained reference to the requirement for monitoring procedures as part of the framework of implementing the policy effectively and consistently.

The purpose of this report is to submit the first set of statistics for Committee's interest; and to propose periodic or quarterly reporting for the future.

As set out in Section 6 of the policy, the production of statistics, in isolation, does not necessarily effectively manage absence; that is a responsibility of managers, as is the analysis of the data, the assessment of problems and the best measures to resolve them.

The statistics, accordingly, require to be dealt with given this proviso and future reporting structured to provide analysis and commentary on the data collated.

Detail

The statistics have been collated and are presented, by service, on a quarterly basis, commencing with the period April - December 1997. The formula adopted is the number of working days absent as a proportion of the total working days available and expressed as a percentage.

Appendix 1 sets out the absence statistics.

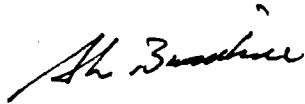
It is intended that Council Departments be provided with the absence statistics for their respective services to facilitate commentary and to incorporate summary observations for future reports.

Committee will note that the absence statistics as provided in Appendix 1 are data internal to the Council and unless or until other Councils publish their respective data, it is not possible to provide comparative levels. Similarly, there is no national yardstick or benchmark which sets a particular standard to allow the Council's data to be compared against.

In similar vein, variations between quarters will be influenced for example by the incidence of long term illness or injury, resulting in the fluctuations noted in the data. For these reasons, it is important to establish the circumstances which give rise to the data and which subsequent reports are intended to reflect.

Recommendation

That Committee note the first set of absence statistics collated; agree to the submission of these on a quarterly basis; note the proposals to supplement the statistics with commentary.

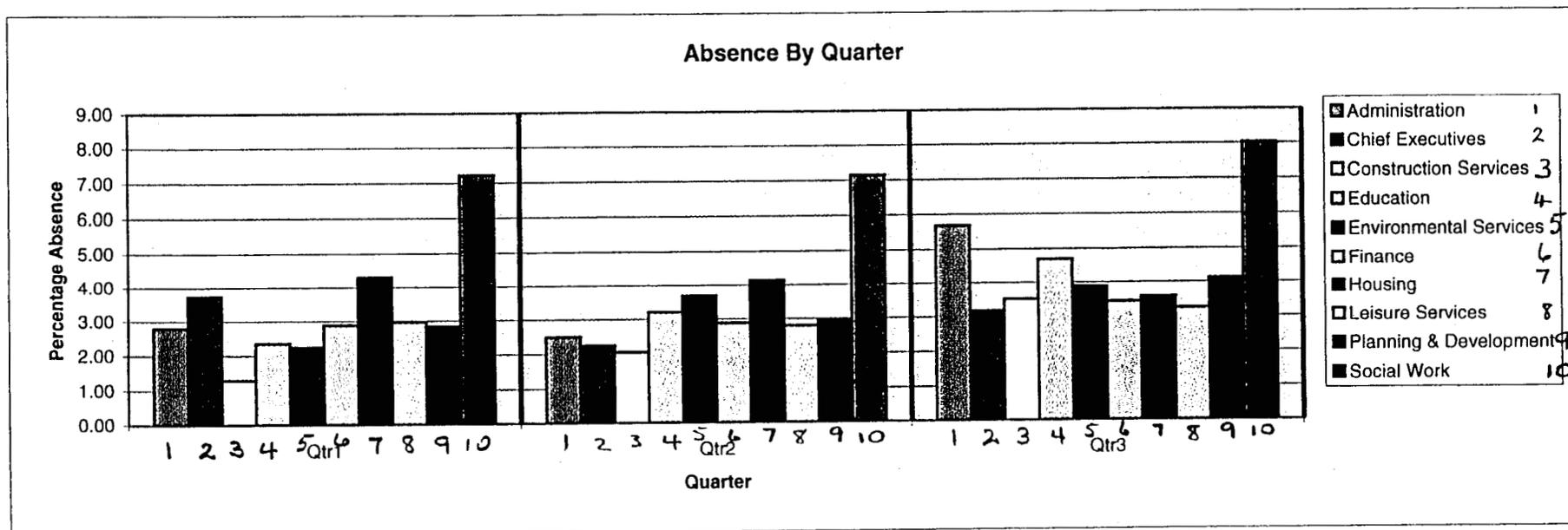


Head of Personnel Services

Non Manual Staff including Teachers

Absence Analysis Quarterly Statistics April to December 1997

	%			
	Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4
Administration	2.79	2.48	5.68	
Chief Executives	3.73	2.24	3.18	
Construction Services	1.30	2.05	3.50	
Education	2.35	3.21	4.69	
Environmental Services	2.24	3.68	3.88	
Finance	2.88	2.88	3.43	
Housing	4.30	4.13	3.57	
Leisure Services	2.97	2.80	3.23	
Planning & Development	2.83	2.92	4.12	
Social Work	7.22	7.14	8.03	



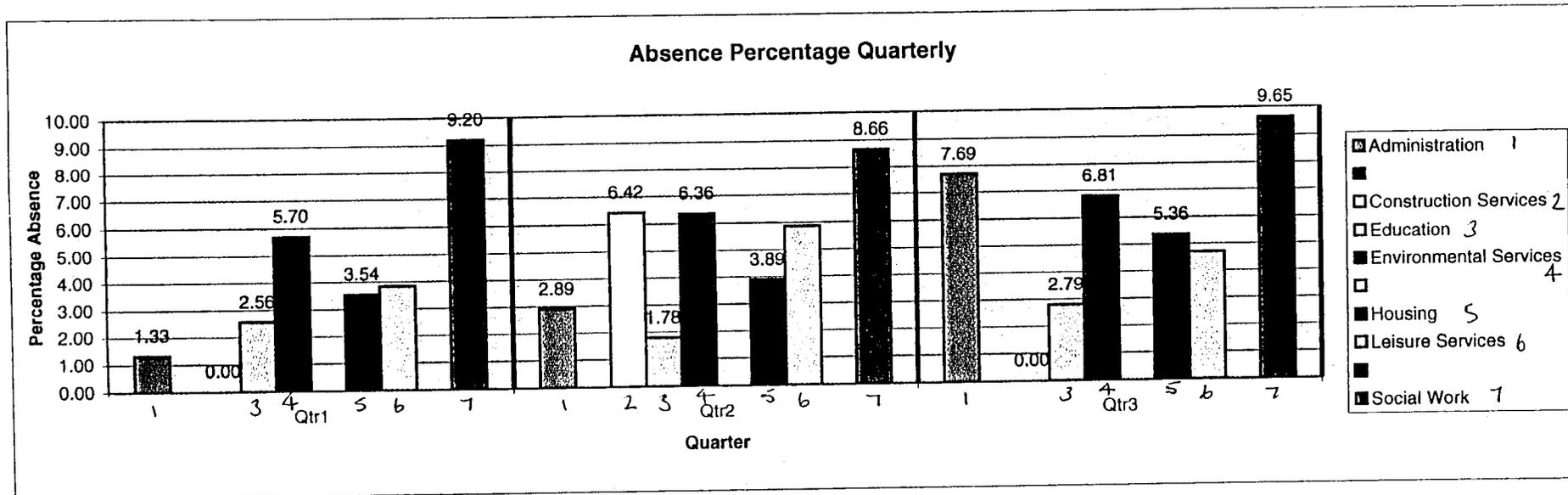
Manual and Craft

Absence Analysis Quarterly Statistics April to December 1997

%

	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4
Administration	1.33	2.89	7.69	
Construction Services		6.42		
Education	2.56	1.78	2.79	
Environmental Services	5.70	6.36	6.81	
Housing	3.54	3.89	5.36	
Leisure Services	3.83	5.86	4.69	
Social Work	9.20	8.66	9.65	

Construction no statistics calculable for Qtr 1 or 3



NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

REPORT

TO: Social Work Committee	Subject: Absence Monitoring
FROM: Jim Dickie Director of Social Work	
DATE OF COMMITTEE: 6th October 1998	
REPORT AUTHOR: Ian Crawford	
REF: absmon/IC/per6/Sep98	

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise the Committee of current levels of Absence in the Department.
- 1.2 To advise Committee of the steps being taken to reduce absence levels in Department.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Due to Management concerns over the high absence levels in 1997 it was decided that a working group should be set up to recommend solutions.
- 2.2 Trade Union involvement in the process was seen as essential and two Unison Representatives were included in the working group. The working group met several times during late 1997 and early 1998.
- 2.3 The working group consulted with the work force by means of a questionnaire in order to establish their views on whether existing policies and procedures contributed to absence levels.
- 2.4 The Management Team and the three Trade Unions (Unison, GMB and T&G) endorsed the recommendation of the group which has resulted in following action:-

3 DEPARTMENTAL ACTION

- 3.1 A joint letter agreed with Trade Unions is to be sent to all employees (copy attached).
- 3.2 Revised procedures as recommended by working group are being introduced throughout the department.
- 3.3 A Training Programme was carried out for all staff involved in Absence Management during May and June 1998.

- 3.4 Improved systems have been introduced to help managers carry out in-depth analysis of absences. Up to date information is now available on the Social Work data base.
- 3.5 Revised control documentation has been introduced to improve monitoring of absent employees.
- 3.6 Action will be required by both Social Work and Personnel Services to ensure delays in securing medical referrals are reduced to a minimal level.
- 3.7 The Department will work co-operatively with employees who are experiencing difficulties due to the nature of their work and where possible and appropriate they will be considered for redeployment to alternatives positions.
- 3.8 The Department will, in consultation with its Trade Unions, seek to reduce the time taken to approve ill health and capability retireals/terminations.
- 3.9 Further training for staff throughout the Department will be held to introduce new procedures.
- 3.10 Regular meetings will take place involving both management and trade union representation to monitor progress in reducing absence levels.

4 PERSONAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The action taken or proposed by the Department complies with the Draft Absence Policy for the Council.

5 ABSENCE LEVELS

The APT & C absence levels for period 6 which covers the period from 17th August to 13th September are shown below:-

	Total	Short Term		Long Term
		Self Cert	Med Cert	Med Cert
Res Elderly Units	10.0%	1.8%	1.5%	6.7%
Day Care	7.4%	2.9%	.6%	3.9%
Child Care (Res)	4.2%	1.1%	1.5%	1.6%
Office Based	5.3%	1.5%	.9%	2.9%
Overall Department	6.2%	2.0%	1.1%	3.1%

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 Committee are asked to note the comments of this report.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 Background papers are held by the Principal Officer (Personnel and Training)



Jim Dickie
Director of Social Work
30th September 1998

For further information on this report please contact , Ian Crawford, Principal Officer (Personnel and Training) (TEL: 01698 332037)



Our Ref:
Your Ref:
Date:

Contact:
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Director of Social Work
Jim Dickie

Absence Management

Introduction of New Procedures

The Social Work Department, North Lanarkshire Council and the Trade Unions have concerns over current levels of absence. Levels of absence have a direct impact on the service we can deliver to the public and represent a significant financial cost to the Council. It is recognised that the nature of the work in some Social Work settings can have an impact on staff absence. The new procedures have been drawn up to deal with issues arising from the nature of the work as well as other more general concerns. The new procedures have three objectives:-

- 1) To ensure that while putting the welfare of staff at the centre of our concerns effective action is taken to minimise unnecessary absence and thus protect the level and quality of services.
- 2) Proper help and support is available for members of staff who have difficulties.
- 3) Through the use of improved information any underlying operational problems which are leading to undue levels of absence in particular areas of service should be identified and addressed.

The management of the department and the Trade Unions are united in trying to find solutions that will both reduce the level of absence and reduce any problems or difficulties that staff experience. In order to make progress in tackling this problem the co-operation of all members of staff will be necessary. The management of the department and the Trade Unions are seeking your help to make these new procedures work and to progressively remove the burden that high levels of absence impose on Social Work Services.

Social Work

Unison

GMB

TGWU

J Dickie

M O'Leary

I Lewthwaite

J Corry