

REPORT

To: PERSONNEL SERVICES COMMITTEE		Subject: ABSENCE MANAGEMENT STATISTICS APRIL to JUNE 1999
From: HEAD OF PERSONNEL SERVICES		
Date: 14 OCTOBER 1999	Ref: IW/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 the financial Year 1999/2000 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 analysis and commentary is vital to proper consideration and management action.

Detail

The statistics have been collated and are presented, by service, on a quarterly basis, commencing with the period April - June 1999. The formula adopted is the number of working days absent as a proportion of the total working days available, expressed as a percentage.

Appendix 1 sets out the absence statistics. The table below represents an overview for the Council as a whole.

	Manual	Non Manual	Teachers	Overall
Working Days	383,382	268,031	149,149	800,562
Absence Days	33,154	15,259	6,174	54,587
% Absence	8.65	5.69	4.14	6.82

Committee will note that the absence statistics as provided above and 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. Some work is proceeding in this regard within Benchmarking groups and in the future useful comparative performance figures may become available.

The statistics will be influenced, sometimes significantly by the incidence of long term illness, resulting in the fluctuations evident from one quarter to the next. For these reasons, it is important to establish the circumstances which give rise to the data and the departmental commentaries contained in Appendix 2 are designed to provide the Committee with an explanation of the underlying absence levels and trends reflected in the statistic.

Recommendations

- (1) The Committee is requested to note the absence statistics collated for Quarter 1, April to June 1999, as outlined in Appendix 1.
- (2) The Committee is requested to note the commentaries supplied by departmental Directors, as outlined in Appendix 2, and
- (3) Otherwise note the terms of the report.

Aris Wylie

Head of Personnel Services

APPENDIX 2.

COMMENTARY ON ABSENCE STATISTICS BY DEPARTMENT (QUARTER 1 - APRIL TO JUNE 1999)

1. Chief Executive's

15 employees were absent through illness during the first quarter of the year with a total of 50 days lost. No members of staff were on long term absence and no medical referrals were made to SALUS during this period.

All absences are dealt with in line with the Council's Absence Management Policy. In addition, all employees have been issued with the Absence Management Policy together with information on reporting absence and return to work interviews. To facilitate absence monitoring, all Section Managers are provided with details on a monthly basis of employee attendance.

2. Administration

The Manual & Craft percentage can be wholly attributed to the long term absences of two of the seven employees totalling 156 days. One of these employees has since been retired on ill-health grounds in line with the Council's absence management policy. Among the non manual staff the long term absence of nine employees contributed to 394 days out of a total of 675 days lost due to absence during the period. The staff concerned were subject to the Absence Management Policy including medical referral and four have now been retired on grounds of ill-health. The remaining 281 days reflect an absence percentage of 2.27%.

All absences are dealt with in line with the Council's Absence Management procedures.

3. Community Services

There were approximately 50 long term absences which exceeded 6 months and these clearly impacted upon the statistics. A concerted effort has been made to deal with these absences and considerable support given to Management in this respect. As a result, 31 of the 50 or so cases have now been concluded with 11 employees returning to work and the dismissal of 20 employees on the grounds of incapability.

Although difficult to quantify or substantiate, the period in question included the effective date of the Council restructuring and the establishment of the Department of Community Services. While the connection may be rather tenuous it is suggested that the uncertainty of this period and the rationalisation of systems and procedures may have impacted upon attendance levels. Considerable steps have been taken over the last 6 months or so to reinforce and enhance management techniques utilised within the Department. These include:-

- a) ensuring a return to work interview is carried out following all periods of sickness absence,
- b) instigating medical referrals after 6 weeks in all appropriate cases,
- c) management maintaining contact with all employees during protracted periods of absence,
- d) establishment of an extensive absence management training programme for all relevant departmental managers, and
- e) designing and implementing a system of monitoring long term absences.

4. Construction Services

Overall within Construction Services the reason for the high absence percentages is due to the impact of long term absences on the statistics. During the period April to June 32 employees remained on long term absence (exceeding six months) while six new medical referrals were made to SALAS.

The quarterly figure for APT&C employees of 6.23% reflects a total of 1268 days lost through absence while the figure of 12.25% for Manual employees reflects 9187 days lost through absence.

The department utilises the procedures as specified in the Absence Management Policy.

5. Education

The day to day management of absence is undertaken at establishment level by the head of establishment in accordance with the Absence Management policy for non-teaching staff, or Standard Circular No 73 - Management of Staff Absence for teaching staff - whichever is appropriate.

In relation to Chief Officials and the former APT&C employees, this category is an amalgamation of full-time and term-time staff. The actual percentage figure for full-time employees was 6.47%, whilst for term-time it was 4.47%.

There are no seasonal or specific factors contributing to the statistics in this period.

6. Finance

Within the Finance Department a total of 864 days were lost through absence during the first reporting quarter contributing to the absence percentage of 4.87%.

One employee continued to be in a long term absence situation which exceeded six months or more during the period while 2 new medical referrals were made to SALUS in this quarter.

There are no seasonal or specific factors contributing to the statistics in this period.

All absences are dealt with in line with the Council's absence Management Policy.

7. Housing & Property Services

Within Housing and Property Services medically certified absences impact considerably on the overall absence statistics accounting for 64% of absences amongst APT&C employees and 77% of the absences amongst Manual employees.

Although absence performance is good in the majority of offices/sections there is need for improvement mainly amongst manual employees. Monthly returns into the next quarter indicate a downward trend in sickness absence levels which can be attributed to ill health retirees and return to work.

Every effort is made to deal with each absence in line with the Council's Absence Management Policy.

8. Planning & Economic Development

The 5.2 % average for the quarter reflects monthly figures for April, May and June of 6.2% , 4.9% and 4.5% respectively.

Eleven employees absent for six weeks or more contributed 432 days to the total days lost through absence of 982. Of these employees one has since resigned and three have retire on grounds of ill health. The remaining absence days lost in the quarter reflect an absence rate of 3%.

All absences are dealt with in accordance with the Council's Absence Management policy.

9. Social Work

APT&C

It should be noted that absence levels include residential staff, day care staff, field workers as well as office based staff. The overall average absence for the first quarter was 6.09 % reflecting an average within office based settings of 5.6% and amongst residential homes for the elderly of 10.4%.

Over the last twelve months long term absence in residential units has decreased as a result of the effort which has been put in to manage the absence levels but there is still some way to go to reduce absence to satisfactory levels. In office based settings long term absences have increased during the period, however the causes of this are individual and do not indicate ongoing problems.

Home Care

Over the last twelve months absence levels have dropped by 30%. An improved working relationship with SALUS has decreased waiting time for medicals and this has resulted in the identification and processing of Ill Health Retirals. This process is ongoing and further retirals are expected.

Overview

Long term absence continues to represent approximately 60% of absence across the department however an improved working relationship with SALUS is reducing the length of time taken for medicals and subsequent remedial action. Considerable improvement has also been achieved in reducing absence in residential units through early retiral procedures.

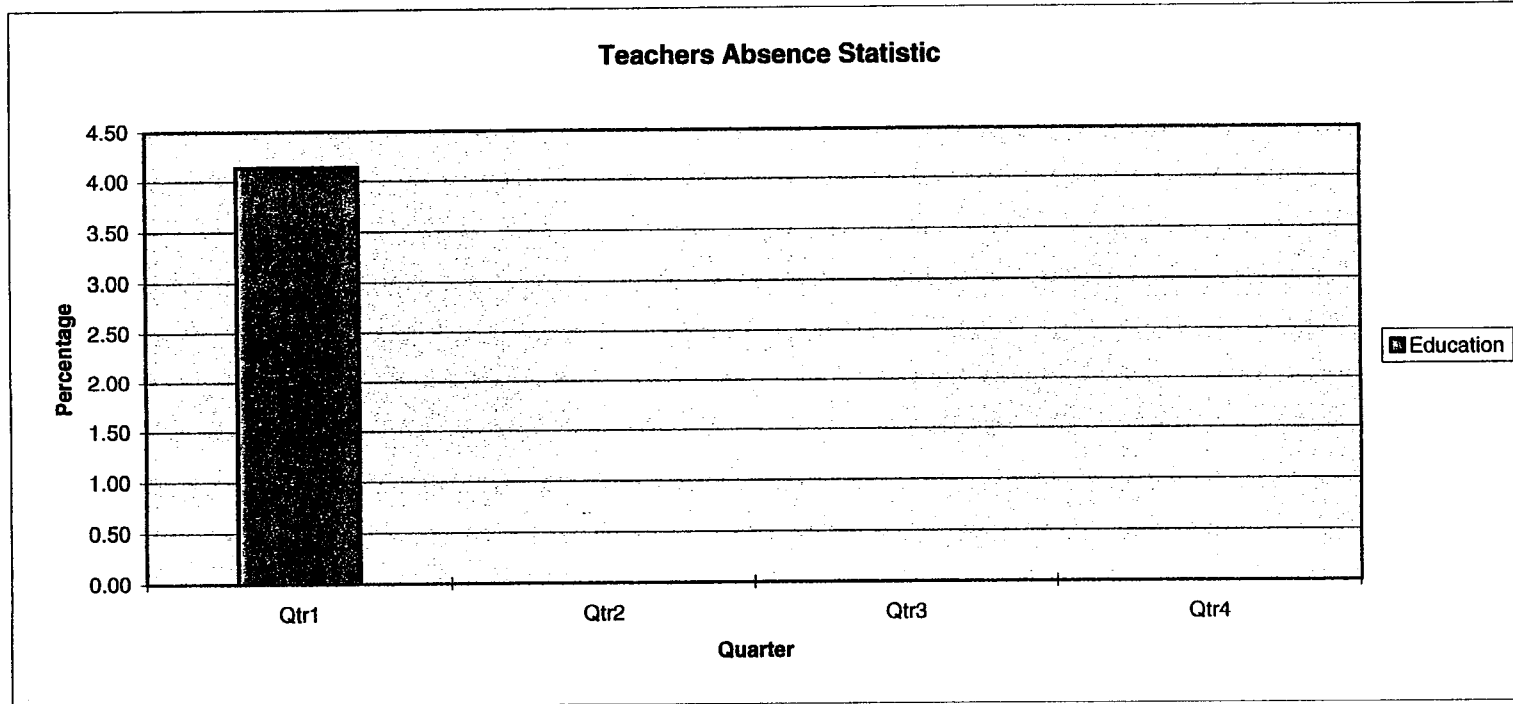
During the past two years management and trade unions have worked together to identify ways of reducing absence within the department. The procedures and processes which apply within the department have been jointly agreed and are in line with the Council's Absence Management Policy.

Education - Teachers

Absence Analysis Quarterly Statistics April 1999 to March 2000

%

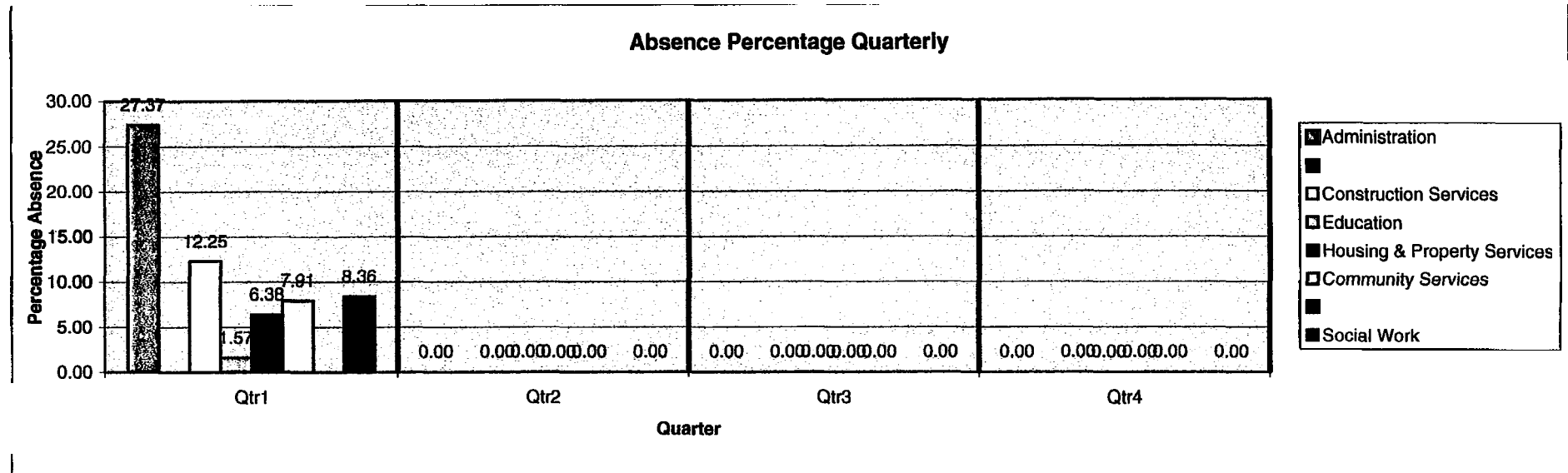
Education	4.14
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Absence Analysis Quarterly Statistics April 1999 to March 2000

%

Administration	27.37	
Construction Services	12.25	
Education	1.57	
Housing & Property Services	6.38	
Community Services	7.91	
Social Work	8.36	



Non Manual Staff

Absence Analysis Quarterly Statistics April 1999 to March 2000

%

Administration	5.46
Chief Executives	1.89
Construction Services	6.23
Education	7.44
Finance	4.54
Housing & Property	4.59
Community Services	5.00
Planning & Environment	5.19
Social Work	6.09

Absence By Quarter

