

REPORT

To: PERSONNEL SERVICES COMMITTEE	Subject: ABSENCE MANAGEMENT STATISTICS JULY to SEPTEMBER 1999	
From: HEAD OF PERSONNEL SERVICES		
Date: 12 th JANUARY 2000	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 provide the Committee with the up to date statistics for Quarter 2 of the financial Year 1999/2000 and provide comparison with Quarter 1.

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. 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. The General Manager, Construction Services informed me subsequent to the last Personnel Committee that the figures presented by his department were erroneous. The required amendments have been included in this report.

	Manual	Non Manual	Teachers	Overall
Working Days	374,518	266,359	149,149	790,026
Absence Days	33,705	15,221	6,174	55,100
% Absence Qtr 2	8.54	5.28	3.99	6.75
% Absence Qtr 1	9.00	5.71	4.14	6.97

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 giving 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 contents of the report.

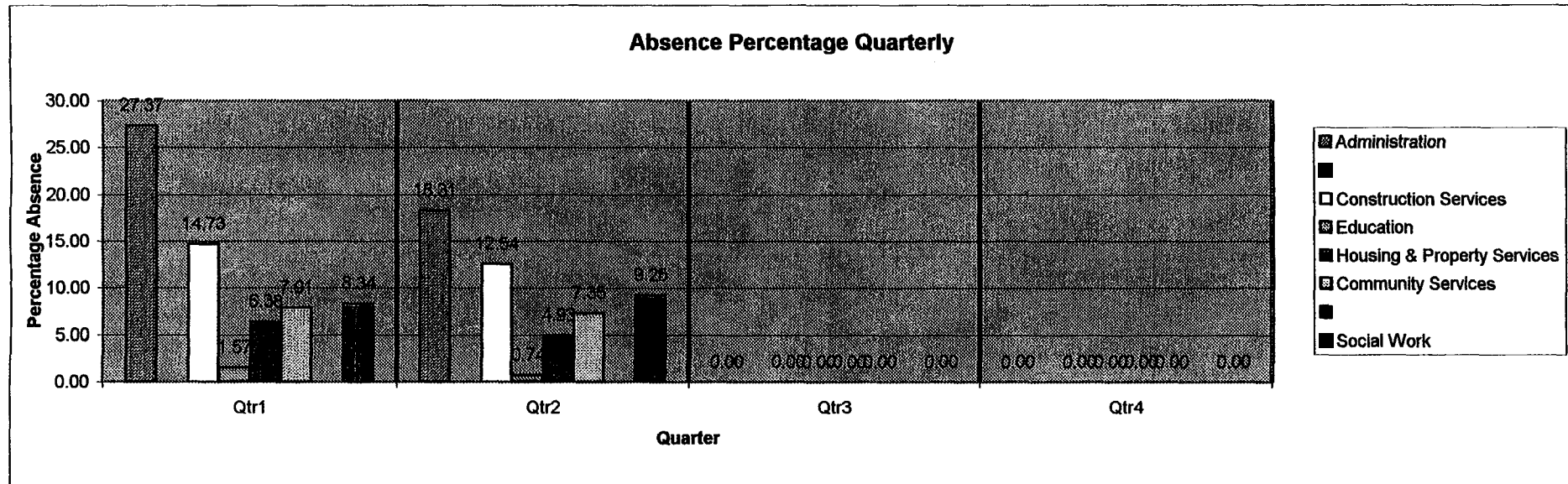
Aris Wylie

Head of Personnel Services

Absence Analysis Quarterly Statistics April 1999 to March 2000

%

Administration	27.37	18.31		
Construction Services	14.73	12.54		
Education	1.57	0.74		
Housing & Property Services	6.38	4.93		
Community Services	7.91	7.35		
Social Work	8.34	9.25		

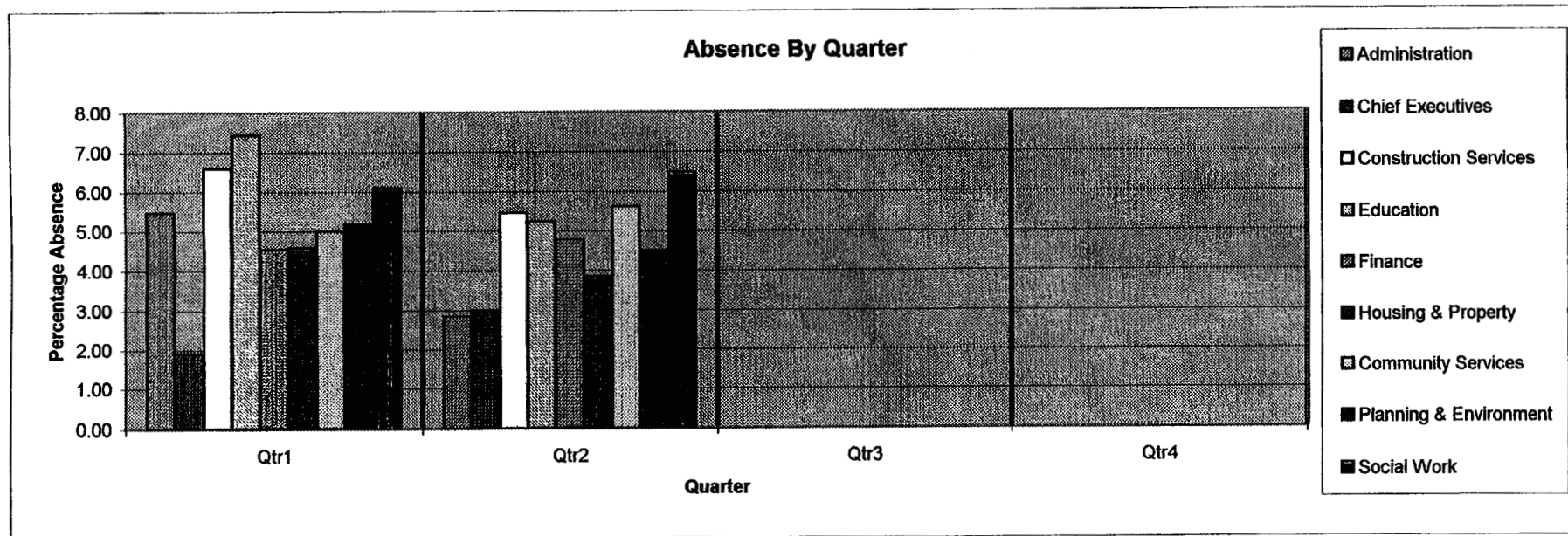


Non Manual Staff

Absence Analysis Quarterly Statistics April 1999 to March 2000

%

Administration	5.46	2.84		
Chief Executives	1.89	3.00		
Construction Services	6.59	5.48		
Education	7.44	5.24		
Finance	4.54	4.77		
Housing & Property	4.59	3.84		
Community Services	5.00	5.61		
Planning & Environment	5.19	4.49		
Social Work	6.09	6.48		

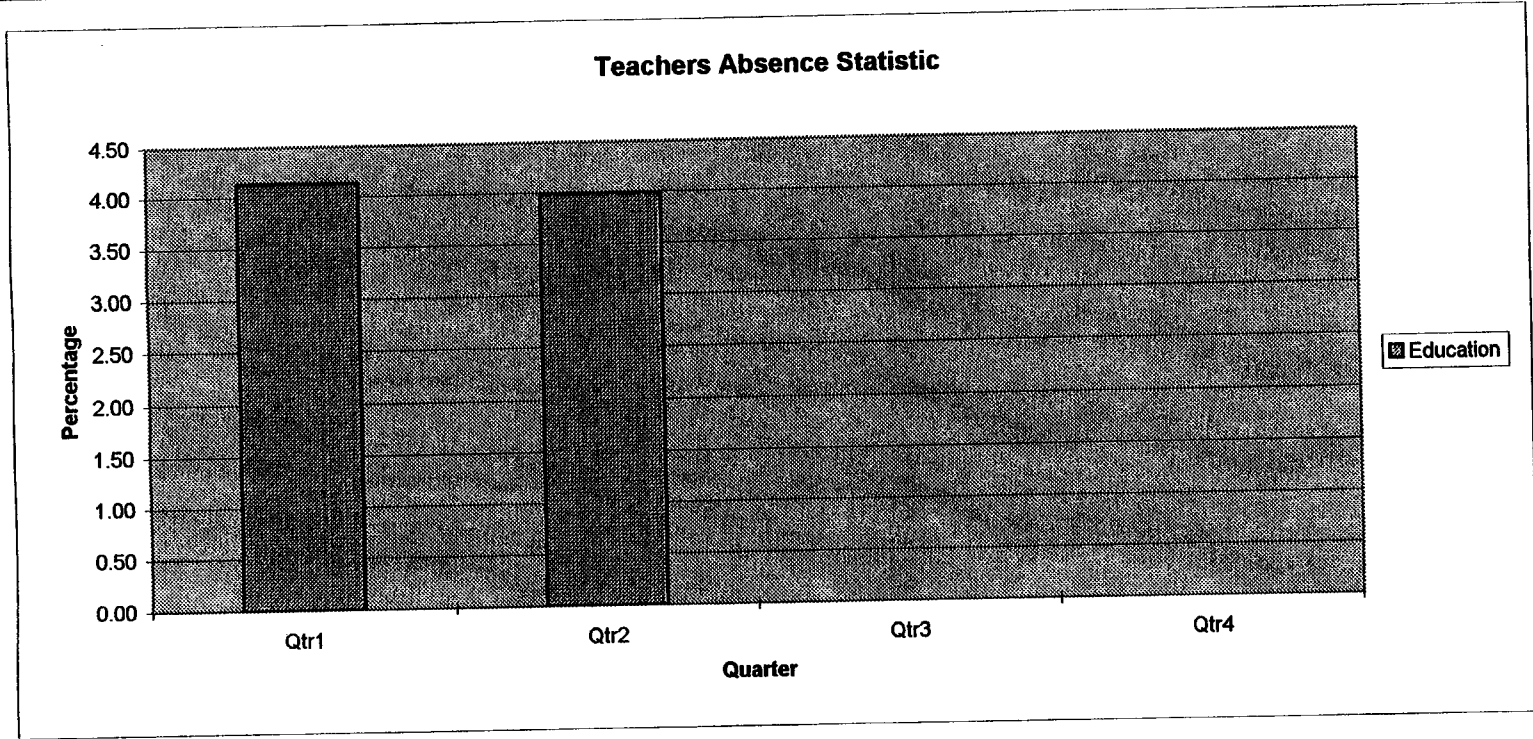


Education - Teachers

Absence Analysis Quarterly Statistics April 1999 to March 2000

%

Education	4.14	3.99		
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APPENDIX 2.

COMMENTARY ON ABSENCE STATISTICS BY DEPARTMENT (QUARTER 2 - JULY TO SEPTEMBER 1999)

1. Chief Executives

Within the Chief Executive's Department the 3.00% average for the second quarter reflects monthly figures for July, August and September of 2.22%, 3.11% and 3.80% respectively. This quarterly figure reflects a total of 75.5 days lost through absence. One member of staff was on long term absence (six weeks or more) during the period accounting for a total of 63 days. The remaining 12.5 days lost reflect an absence percentage of 0.5%. No medical referrals were made during this quarter.

2. Administration

Within the Administration Department the 2.84% average for non-manual employees for the second quarter reflects monthly figures for July, August and September of 2.56%, 2.48% and 3.48% respectively. The 18.31% for manual employees for the second quarter reflects monthly figures for July, August and September of 18.12%, 18.82% and 17.96% respectively. These quarterly figures reflect 340 days lost during the period for non-manual employees and 93 days lost for manual employees.

Within the manual grouping one employee on long term absence accounted for 92 of the 93 days lost during the period, while two non-manual employees accounted for 129 days of the 340 days lost during the period. Of these two employees, one has returned to work with one being retired on grounds of ill health.

All absences are managed in accordance with the Council's Absence Management Policy.

3. Community Services

There were 70 long-term absences (exceeding 6 months) which 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, 47 of the 70 cases have now been concluded with 8 employees returning to work, the dismissal of 25 employees on the grounds of incapability, 3 employees resigned and 11 employees were retired on the grounds of ill health.

Considerable steps have been taken over the last 9 months or so to reinforce, co-ordinate 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

Within the Construction Services Department the 5.46% average for non manual employees for the second quarter reflects monthly figures for July, August and September of 5.57%, 5.88% and 4.88% respectively. The 12.54% for manual employees for the second quarter reflects monthly figures for July, August and September of 13.06%, 12.59% and 11.91% respectively. The quarterly figure for non manual employees of 5.46% represents a total of 1005 days lost through absence while the figure of 12.54% for manual employees reflects a total of 8331 days lost through absence. 62 employees were on long term absence (six weeks or more) during the period. 30 new medical referrals were made during the period while 35 cases were concluded with 10 employees returning to work, 4 being dismissed on grounds of incapability, 13 retiring on ill health grounds, 5 resigning and 3 transferring to other departments.

The high absence figure for the period reflects the problem of long term absence within the department which is being managed in accordance with the Council's Absence Management Policy.

5. Education

Within the Education Department the 4.31% average for the second quarter reflects monthly figures for July, August and September of 3.06%, 4.31% and 4.43% respectively.

The quarterly figure for manual employees of 0.74% reflects a total of 16 days lost through absence while the non-manual figure of 5.24% reflects 1819 days lost. The 3.99% figure for teachers reflects 3046 days lost during the quarter.

72 members of staff out of a total workforce of 6802 (1.05%) were on long term absence (six weeks or more) during the period (52 teaching/20 non teaching employees) and these accounted for a total of 2354 days lost during the period. The remaining 2527 days lost reflect an absence percentage of 2.23%. 8 new medical referrals were made during the period while 2 cases have now been concluded with 1 employee returning to work and 1 employee retiring on grounds of ill health.

As the figures reflect, the department has 72 employees on long-term absence within teaching and non-teaching. These absences are all monitored and managed by line managers with support provided by the personnel section of the education department. The age profile of the workforce is a factor in relation to the long term absences as falling pupil rolls means we are shedding teaching posts and employing fewer younger teachers.

6. Finance

Within the Finance Department the 4.77% average for the second quarter reflects monthly figures for July, August and September of 3.62%, 4.72% and 6.01% respectively. This quarterly figure reflects a total of 911 days lost through absence during the period.

The overall absence level of 4.77% for the quarter is consistent with the previous period. There are no seasonal factors evident in the absence monitoring and the long term trend is broadly stable.

Detailed analysis of the position, however, indicates that levels of sickness absence are not uniform throughout the department. Senior management have conducted a review of this and agreed a programme of action which will include monthly monitoring and appropriate follow-up action within the terms of the Council's Absence Management Policy.

7. Housing & Property Services

Within the Housing and Property Services Department, the 4.08% average for the second quarter reflects monthly figures for July, August and September 1999 of 3.98%, 3.71% and 4.58% respectively.

The quarterly figure for non manual employees of 3.84% reflects a total of 1446 days lost through absence while the figure of 4.93% for manual employees reflects a total of 528 days lost through absence.

19 employees were on long term absence (six weeks or more) during the period and these accounted for a total of 932 days lost during the period, with 1062 days lost remaining.

Five new medical referrals were made during the period while one case has been concluded with this employee being dismissed on the grounds of incapability.

In comparison to April - June 1999 statistics (4.6% manual and 6.4% APT&C), there has been a downward trend in absence levels (4.08% and 3.84% respectively), which can be attributed to good absence management. It continues to be noted that there is room for improvement and every effort will be made to deal with absences in line with the Council's Absence Management Policy.

8. Planning & Economic Development

Within the Planning and Environment Department the 4.5% average for the second quarter reflects monthly figures for July, August and September of 5.0% 4.4% and 4.1% respectively. The quarterly figure for non manual employees of 4.5% reflects a total of 862 days lost through absence. During this quarter 9 members of staff were on long term absence (six weeks or more) and these accounted for a total of 403.5 days lost during the period. Of these cases, 7 have now been concluded with 5 employees returning to work, 1 ill health retiral and 1 resignation. The remaining 2 cases are subject to ongoing review and management by Departmental Managers in conjunction with Personnel Services. The remaining 458.5 days lost reflect an absence percentage of 2.4%. There were no new medical referrals made during the period.

The above statistics reflect a reduction from the previous quarter's absence statistics. The Department continues to monitor the statistics and individual absence cases are managed in accordance with the Council's Absence Management Policy.

9. Social Work

Within the Social Work Department the average absence for the period 1 July 1999 to 30 September 1999 was 7.6% which reflects totals of 7.95% for July, 7.32% for August, and 7.48% for September.

The quarterly figure for non manual employees of 6.5% reflects 5130 days lost through absence and the figure of 9.25% for manual represents 4643 days lost through absence. During this quarter non manual absences showed a general reduction from 7% in July to 6.15% in September. This is part of a longer term reduction in absence levels which has been apparent in the last periods. Within these figures there has been a slight increase in self certified absences, however there has also been a reduction in longer term absences. This is in line with expectations as the Department continues the process of dealing with longer term absences through our medical advisers .

The figures for manual employees show a drop in August followed by an increase in September. The department continues work to reduce this figure which it should be noted has decreased over a twelve month period. As is the case with non manual employees the department is dealing with long term absences through our medical advisers.

During the quarter there were 33 new cases referred for independent medical advice and 18 current cases were concluded with 11 staff returning to work and 7 leaving the Council's service.