

REPORT

To: PERSONNEL SERVICES COMMITTEE	Subject: ABSENCE MANAGEMENT STATISTICS OCTOBER to DECEMBER 1999	
From: HEAD OF PERSONNEL SERVICES		
Date: 25 th FEBRUARY 2000	Ref: IW/MB	

1. Introduction

- 1.1 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.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with the up to date statistics for Quarter 3 of the financial Year 1999/2000 and provide comparison with Quarters 1 and 2.
- 1.3 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.

2. Detail

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 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	286,456	323,825	177,988	788,269
Absence Days	26,498	18,139	9,578	54,215
% Absence Qtr 3	9.19	5.96	5.38	7.12
% Absence Qtr 2	8.54	5.28	3.99	6.75
% Absence Qtr 1	9.00	5.71	4.14	6.97

- 2.3 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.

3 Recommendation

3.1 The Committee is requested to note the contents of the report.

Iris Wylie

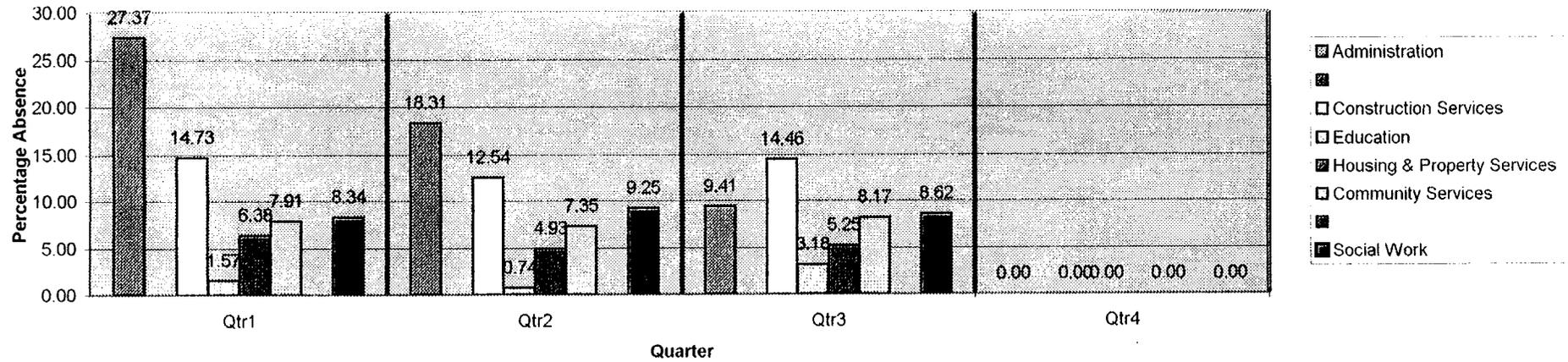
Head of Personnel Services

Absence Analysis Quarterly Statistics April 1999 to March 2000

%

Department	Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4
Administration	27.37	18.31	9.41	
Construction Services	14.73	12.54	14.46	
Education	1.57	0.74	3.18	
Housing & Property Services	6.38	4.93	5.25	
Community Services	7.91	7.35	8.17	
Social Work	8.34	9.25	8.62	

Absence Percentage Quarterly



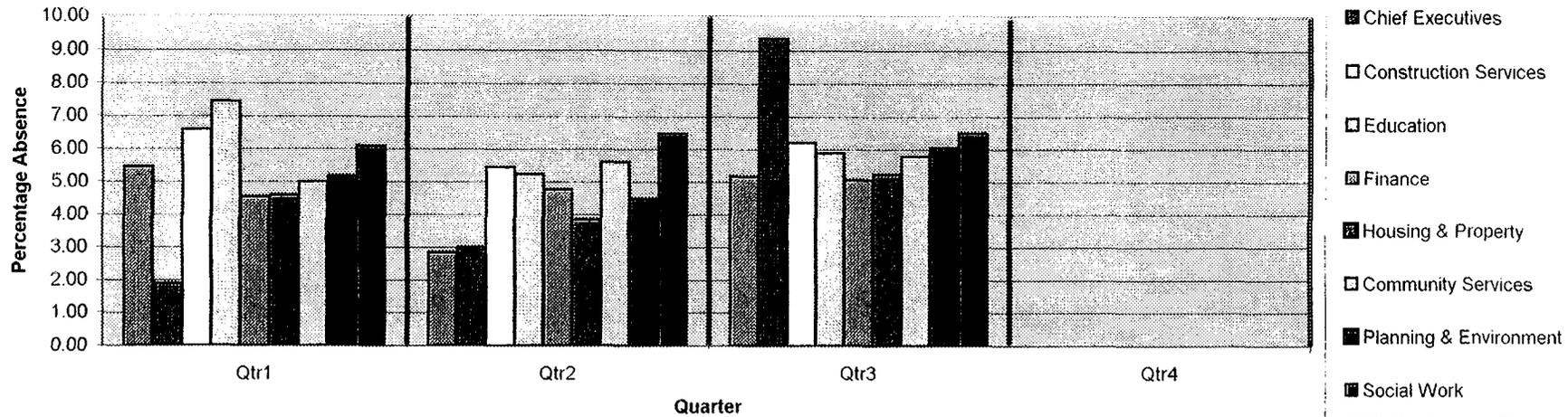
Non Manual Staff

Absence Analysis Quarterly Statistics April 1999 to March 2000

%

Department	Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4
Administration	5.46	2.84	5.18	
Chief Executives	1.89	3.00	9.35	
Construction Services	6.59	5.46	6.21	
Education	7.44	5.24	5.91	
Finance	4.54	4.77	5.07	
Housing & Property	4.59	3.84	5.25	
Community Services	5.00	5.61	5.80	
Planning & Environment	5.19	4.49	6.06	
Social Work	6.09	6.48	6.49	

Absence By Quarter



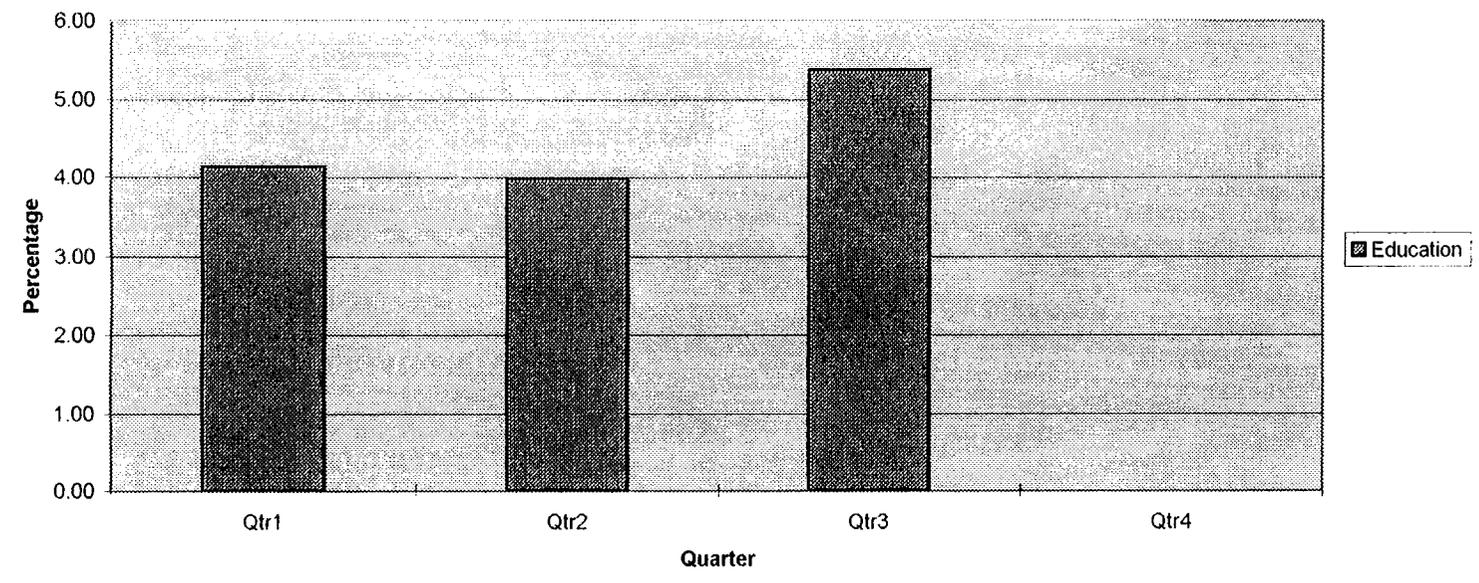
Education - Teachers

Absence Analysis Quarterly Statistics April 1999 to March 2000

%

Department	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Education	4.14	3.99	5.38	

Teachers Absence Statistic



APPENDIX 2.

COMMENTARY ON ABSENCE STATISTICS BY DEPARTMENT (QUARTER 3 - OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 1999)

1. Chief Executives

Within the Chief Executive's Department the 9.35% average for the third quarter reflects monthly figures for October, November and December of 9.81%, 10.27% and 7.83% respectively. This quarterly figure reflects a total of 241 days lost through absence. Two members of staff were on long term absence (six weeks or more) during the period accounting for a total of 83 days. The remaining 158 days lost reflect an absence percentage of 5.95%. One new medical referral was made during this quarter with the employee returning to work on 3/12/99.

2. Administration

Within the Administration Department the 5.18% average for non-manual employees for the third quarter reflects monthly figures for October, November and December of 5.24%, 5.46% and 4.75% respectively. The 9.41% for manual employees for the third quarter reflects monthly figures for October and November of 18.67% and 6.41% respectively. No absences were recorded among manual employees for the month of December. These quarterly figures reflect 558 days lost during the period for non-manual employees and 40 days lost for manual employees.

Within the manual grouping one employee on long term absence accounted for 38 of the 40 days lost during the period. The employee has now returned to work. Of the non manual employees, four employees accounted for 186 days of the 558 days lost during the period. One of these four employees has retired on grounds of ill health and one has returned to work.

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

3. Community Services

There were approximately 41 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, 15 of the 41 cases have now been concluded with 2 employees returning to work, and the dismissal of 13 employees on the grounds of incapability due to 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 6.21% average for non manual employees for the third quarter reflects monthly figures for October, November and December of 5.66%, 5.46% and 7.71% respectively. The 14.46% for manual employees for the third quarter reflects monthly figures for October, November and December of 11.65%, 14.52% and 17.66% respectively. The quarterly figure for non manual employees of 6.21% represents a total of 969 days lost through absence while the figure of 14.46% for manual employees reflects a total of 8305 days lost through absence. 87 employees were on long term absence (six weeks or more) during the period and these accounted for a total of 6280 days lost during the period. The remaining 2994 days were short term absences and reflect an absence percentage of 4.10%. 32 new medical referrals were made during the period while 21 cases were concluded with 12 employees returning to work, 3 being dismissed on grounds of incapability, 5 retiring on ill health grounds and one employee retiring at age 60.

The department's high absence figure reflects the problem of long term absence during this period. The Committee should, however, expect to see a reasonable reduction in this overall figure in the next quarter.

5. Education

Within the Education Department the 5.50% average for the third quarter reflects monthly figures for October, November and December of 5.95%, 5.82% and 4.64% respectively.

The quarterly figure for non manual employees of 5.53% reflects a total of 13580 days lost through absence (Former APT&C employees percentage of 5.91 reflects 4002 days lost, Teachers percentage of 5.38 reflects 9578 days lost) while the 3.18% for manual employees reflects a total of 91 days lost through absence.

100 members of staff out of a total workforce of 6802 (1.47%) were on long term absence (six weeks or more) during the period (80 teaching/20 non teaching employees) and these accounted for a total of 5493 days lost during the period. The remaining 8178 days lost reflect an absence percentage of 3.29%. 7 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 incapability.

As the figures reflect, the department has 100 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 the Council is shedding teaching posts and employing fewer younger teachers.

6. Finance -

Within the Finance Department the 5.07% average for the third quarter reflects monthly figures for October, November and December of 5%, 4.44% and 5.8% respectively. The quarterly figure for non manual employees of 5.07% reflects a total of 981 days lost through absence. The total days lost include 4 members of staff who have been on long term absence (six weeks or more) and account for 252 days. The remaining 729 days reflect an absence percentage of 3.8%. During the period there were no new medical referrals and no employees have been dismissed on the grounds of incapability.

The overall absence level of 5.07% for the quarter is slightly higher than the previous period but is mainly due to long term absence and seasonal factors, such as winter colds. The department has implemented an absence monitoring programme and follow-up action has been taken within the terms of the Council's Absence Management Policy.

7. Housing & Property Services

Within the Housing and Property Services Department, the 5.25 % average (APT & C) for the third quarter reflects monthly figures for October, November and December 1999 of 6.1%, 5.1% and 4.5% respectively.

The quarterly figure for non-manual employees of 5.25% reflects a total of 1983 days lost through absence while the figure also 5.25% for manual employees reflects a total of 576 days lost through absence. Eight new medical referrals were made during the period.

In comparison to July-September 1999 statistics (5.2% manual and 4.2% non-manual), there has been an upward trend in absence levels, which can be attributed the late December flu epidemic throughout. It continues to be noted that there is room for improvement and the department has given assurances that every effort will be made in dealing with absences, in line with the Council's Absence Management Policy.

8. Planning & Environment

Within the Planning and Environment Department the 6.06 % average for the third quarter reflects monthly figures for October, November and December of 4.5%, 5.9% and 8.1% respectively. The quarterly figure for non manual employees of 6.06% reflects a total of 1259 days lost through absence. The Department has no manual employees.

During this quarter 11 members of staff were on long term absence (six weeks or more) and these accounted for a total of 489 days lost during the period. The remaining 770 days lost reflect an absence percentage of 3.8%. Of the above cases, 7 have now been concluded with 4 employees returning to work, 2 ill health retirals and 1 resignation. The remaining 4 cases are subject to ongoing review and management by Departmental managers and where appropriate in conjunction with Personnel Services. There were 3 new medical referrals made during the period.

The above statistics reflect an increase from the previous quarter in both the Department's overall statistics and statistics excluding staff on long term absence. The incidence of flu related absence was a factor which contributed to the days lost particularly in December. Of the 770 days lost during the quarter (excluding long term), 202 days were lost in December due to flu related absences.

The Department continues to monitor the statistics and individual cases are managed in accordance with the Council's Absence Management Policy.

9. Social Work

Within the Social Work Department, the 7.16% average for the third quarter reflects monthly figures for October, November and December of 6.56%, 6.57% and 8.35% respectively.

The quarterly figure for non manual employees of 6.5% reflects 6057 days lost through absence and the figure of 8.62% for manual represents 3663 days lost through absence.

Staff absence continued to show a gradual drop in October and November, however in December the Flu outbreak caused an increase of more than 20% in the overall absence level.

In the manual figures, which mainly consist of Home Care employees, absence levels were rising between October and November, then the Flu outbreak in December worsened an already deteriorating situation. It should be noted that Home Care employees have continued to be included in the manual figures even though they transferred to residential conditions of service as part of the Home Care Review. This allows for the continuation of quarterly comparison to be made within the year for this group of employees. This situation will be remedied in figures produced for the year 2000/2001 which will reflect the new make up of the department.

Discussions have been held with the Council's independent medical advisors in order to ensure continuing downward pressure on absence levels and to ensure potential ill health retirements are processed as quickly as possible.