

**EXCERPT OF MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE PERSONNEL SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD ON
15 JUNE 2000**

ABSENCE MANAGEMENT STATISTICS - JANUARY TO MARCH 2000

19. There was submitted a report dated 4 May 2000 by the Head of Personnel Services providing absence statistics together with a commentary detailing the breakdown of the figures within departments of the Council for the period January to March 2000 for manual and craft employees, non-manual staff and teachers.

Decided:

- (1) that the terms of the report be noted, and
- (2) that the report be remitted to all Service Committees of the Council to enable consideration of the statistics for the appropriate department.

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

REPORT

To: PERSONNEL SERVICES COMMITTEE	Subject: ABSENCE MANAGEMENT STATISTICS JANUARY to MARCH 2000		
From: HEAD OF PERSONNEL SERVICES			
Date: 4 th MAY 2000	Ref: IW/PMCG		

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 4 of the financial Year 1999/2000 and provide comparison with Quarters 1 2 and 3.
- 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 are 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	271,081	332,945	203,104	807,130
Absence Days	29,737	20,018	10,620	60,376
% Absence Qtr 4	10.97	6.01	5.23	7.48
% 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	9.20	5.70	4.14	7.01

- 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.

Mis Wylie

Head of Personnel Services

APPENDIX 2.

COMMENTARY ON ABSENCE STATISTICS BY DEPARTMENT (QUARTER 4 - JANUARY TO MARCH 2000)

1. Chief Executives

The 4.33% quarterly average reflects monthly figures for January, February and March of 5.47%, 3.89% and 3.81% respectively, with a total of 118 days lost through absence.

One member of staff was on long term absence during this period, accounting for a total of 63 days lost. The remaining 55 days lost reflects an absence rate of 1.98%. One new medical referral was made during the quarter.

2. Administration

The 5.67% quarterly average for non-manual employees reflects monthly figures for January, February and March of 7.00%, 5.82% and 4.45% respectively. The 19.63% average for manual employees reflects monthly figures for January, February and March of 16.17%, 20.28% and 21.83% respectively. These quarterly figures reflect 656 days lost during the period for non-manual employees and 79 days lost for manual employees.

Within the manual grouping, one employee accounted for all 79 days lost during the period. Of the non manual employees 3 employees accounted for 189 of the 656 days lost during the period. One new medical referral was made during the period.

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

3. Community Services

The 9.5% quarterly average reflects monthly figures for January, February and March of 11.4%, 9.24% and 8.08% respectively.

The quarterly figure for non manual employees of 4.38% reflects a total of 2315 days lost through absence while the figure of 11.2% for manual employees reflects a total of 16619 days lost through absence.

595 members of staff were on long term absence (six weeks or more) during the period and these accounted for a total of 8872 days lost during the period. The remaining 10371 days lost reflect an absence percentage of 5.1%.

33 new medical referrals were made during the period. 30 cases have now been concluded with 17 employees returning to work, 2 resignations, 1 death in service and 10 dismissals on the grounds of incapability.

There were approximately 26 long-term absences which exceeded 6 months, and have clearly impacted upon the statistics. An ongoing concerted effort is being made to deal with these absences and a considerable level of support is being given to Management in this respect. As a result, 10 of the 26 cases have now been concluded with 4 employees returning to work, and the dismissal of 6 employees on the grounds of incapability due to ill health.

Considerable steps have been taken over the last 11 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

The 6.67% quarterly average (staff) reflects monthly figures for January, February and March of 9.38%, 4.98% and 6.03 respectively.

The 11.45% quarterly average (manual employees) reflects the monthly figures for January, February and March of 14.26%, 10.46% and 9.95% respectively.

The quarterly figure for staff employees of 6.66% represents a total of 1104 days lost through absence.

91 employees were on long term absence (six weeks or more) during the period and these accounted for a total of 5705 days lost during the period. The remaining 2803 days were short term absences and reflect an absence percentage of 3.73%.

17 new medical referrals were made during the period while 40 cases were concluded with 28 returning to work, 1 dismissed on grounds of incapability, 9 retiring on ill health grounds and 2 employees transferred to another department.

5. Education

The 5.34% quarterly average reflects monthly figures for January, February and March 2000 of 5.78%, 5.27% and 5.08% respectively.

The quarterly figure for non manual employees of 5.34% reflects a total of 15,019 days lost through absence (APT&C employees 5.65% reflects 4399 days lost, Teachers is 5.23% which reflects 10,620 days lost) while the figure for manual employees reflects a total of 169 days lost through absence.

141 members of staff out of a total workforce of 5910 (2.39%) were on long term absence (six weeks or more) during the period (103 teaching/38 non teaching employees) and these accounted for a total of 6362 days lost during the period. The remaining 8826 days lost reflect an absence percentage of 3.10%. 11 new medical referrals were made during the period while 8 cases have now been concluded with 4 employees returning to work, 1 being dismissed on the grounds of incapability, 1 resignation, 1 redeployment and 1 ill health retirement.

As the figure reflects, the department has 141 employees on long term absence, both in 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 long term absences. Falling pupil roll means we are shedding teaching posts and employing fewer younger teachers.

The department is currently liaising with E.S.C.U. regarding the feasibility of providing absence statistics through the SEEMIS system.

6. Finance

The 5.16% quarterly average reflects monthly figures for January, February and March of 5.64%, 4.95% and 4.94% respectively.

The quarterly figure for non manual employees of 5.16% reflects a total of 963 days lost through absence.

9 members of staff have who have been on long term absence (six weeks or more) account for 510 days. The remaining 453 days reflect an absence percentage of 2.42%.

During the period there were two new medical referrals, while two cases have now been concluded with one employee returning to work and one employee resigning.

The overall absence level of 5.16% is consistent with the previous period and is mainly due to long term absence.

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

The 4.9% and 7.5% quarterly averages (APT & C and manual respectively) reflect monthly figures for January, February and March 2000 of 6.6%, 3.3% and 5.4% (APT & C) and 8.8%, 7.9% and 6.5% (manual) respectively.

The quarterly figure of 4.9% for non-manual employees reflects a total of 1366.5 days lost whilst the figure of 7.5% for manual employees reflects a total of 761 days lost through absence. Five new medical referrals were made during the period whilst two employees left the department through ill health.

In comparison to the previous quarter, there has been a decrease in relation to APT & C staff absences and an increase in manual staff absences.

It is noted that there is room for improvement and every effort will be made to manage the absences in line with the Council's Absence Management Policy.

8. Planning & Environment

The 5.9% quarterly average reflects monthly figures for January, February and March of 7.9%, 5.4% and 4.7% respectively.

The quarterly figure for non manual employees of 5.9% reflects a total of 1246 days lost through absence.

During this quarter, 11 members of staff were on long term absence (six weeks or more) and these accounted for a total of 538 days lost during the period. The remaining 708 days lost reflect an absence percentage of 3.6%.

Of the above cases, 7 have now been concluded with the employees returning to work. The remaining 4 cases are subject to ongoing review and management by Departmental managers and where appropriate in conjunction with Personnel services.

There were 2 new medical referrals made during the period.

The above statistics reflect a small decrease from the previous quarter in both the Departments' overall statistics and the statistics excluding staff on long term absence.

The incidence of flu related absences was a factor which contributed to the days lost particularly in January. Of the 708 days lost during the quarter (excluding long term), 217 days were lost in January 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

The 7.66% quarterly average for non-manual employees reflects monthly figures for January, February and March of 8.60%, 7.04% and 7.32% respectively. The 10.89% average for manual employees reflects monthly figures for January, February and March of 12.89%, 10.28% and 9.80% respectively. These quarterly figures reflect 7672 days lost during the period for non-manual employees and 5406 days lost for manual employees.

The flu problem, which resulted in the increase of absence levels at the end of the last quarter, reached its peak in January with medium and short term absence levels both increasing.

February and March, however, showed a gradual reducing effect of the flu problem, which resulted in a decrease in both medium and short term absences.

There has however been an increase in long term absence in March, there is no single cause for this and the situation is being closely monitored.

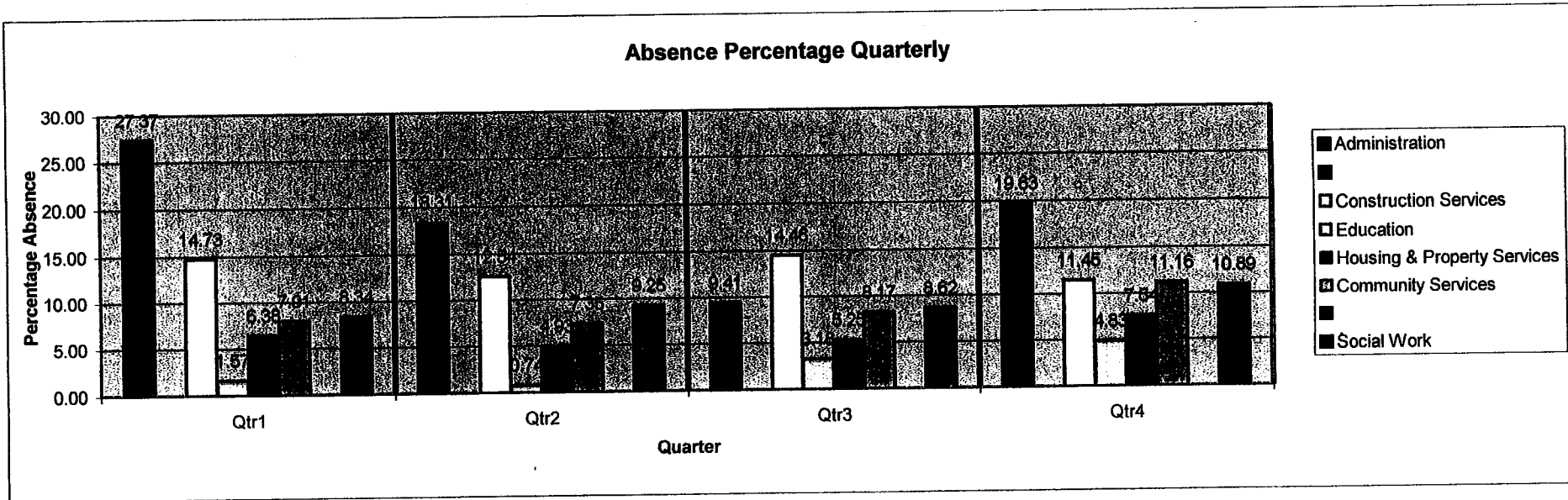
Manual and Craft

APPENDIX 1

Absence Analysis Quarterly Statistics April 1999 to March 2000

%

Administration	27.37	18.31	9.41	19.63
Construction Services	14.73	12.54	14.46	11.45
Education	1.57	0.74	3.18	4.83
Housing & Property Services	6.38	4.93	5.25	7.54
Community Services	7.91	7.35	8.17	11.16
Social Work	8.34	9.25	8.62	10.89

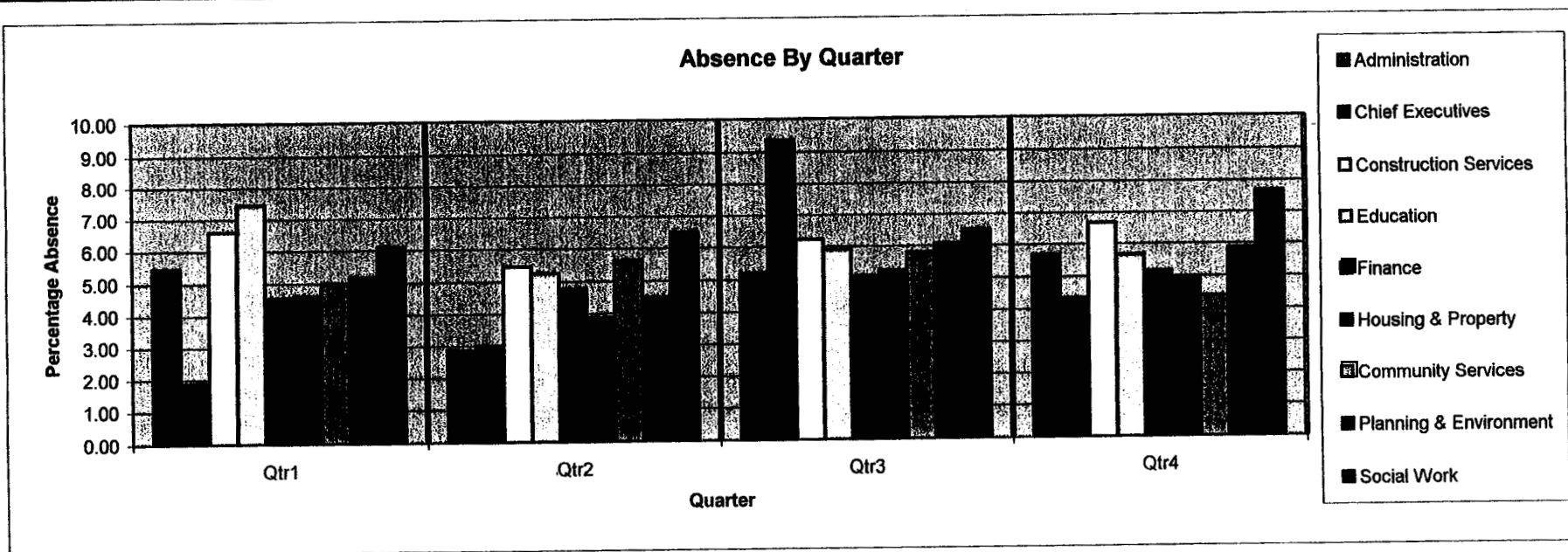


Non Manual Staff

Absence Analysis Quarterly Statistics April 1999 to March 2000

%

Department	Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4
Administration	5.46	2.84	5.18	5.67
Chief Executives	1.89	3.00	9.35	4.33
Construction Services	6.59	5.46	6.21	6.66
Education	7.44	5.24	5.91	5.65
Finance	4.54	4.77	5.07	5.16
Housing & Property	4.59	3.84	5.25	4.95
Community Services	5.00	5.61	5.80	4.38
Planning & Environment	5.19	4.49	6.06	5.87
Social Work	6.09	6.48	6.49	7.66



Education - Teachers

Absence Analysis Quarterly Statistics April 1999 to March 2000

%

Education	4.14	3.99	5.38	5.23
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