

EXCERPT OF MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE PERSONNEL SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD ON  
30 NOVEMBER 2000

**ABSENCE MANAGEMENT POLICY - STATISTICS FROM 1 APRIL TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2000**

28. There was submitted a report dated 20 November 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 April to September 2000 for manual/craft employees, non-manual staff and teachers and providing a comparison with the statistics for April to September 1999.

**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.

REPORT

To: PERSONNEL SERVICES COMMITTEE		Subject: ABSENCE MANAGEMENT STATISTICS APRIL to SEPTEMBER 2000
From: HEAD OF PERSONNEL SERVICES		
Date: 20 NOVEMBER 2000	Ref: IW/JW	

**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 Quarters 1 & 2 of the financial Year 2000/2001 and provide comparison with Quarters 1 & 2 of the year 1999/2000.
- 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 in comparison with the same period in 1999.

	Manual 1999 / 2000	Manual 2000 / 2001	Non Manual 1999 / 2000	Non Manual 2000 / 2001	Teachers 1999 / 2000	Teachers 2000 / 2001	Overall 1999 / 2000	Overall 2000 / 2001
Working Days	696295	514636	535898	698863	225512	280244	1457705	1493743
Absence Days	61869	42105	29484	43437	9220	9901	100573	95443
% Absence Qtr 2	8.55	8.04	5.31	5.84	3.99	2.87	6.78	6.20
% Absence Qtr 1	9.20	8.32	5.69	6.57	4.14	3.91	7.01	6.56
% Absence Qtr 4	10.97		6.01		5.23		7.48	

- 2.3 Committee will note that the absence statistics as provided above and in Appendix 1 are data internal to the Council and 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.

*Gris Wylie*

**Head of Personnel Services**

## APPENDIX 2.

### COMMENTARY ON ABSENCE STATISTICS BY DEPARTMENT (QUARTER 1 & 2 – APRIL TO SEPTEMBER 2000)

#### 1. Chief Executives

In Quarter 1 the 2.75% quarterly average reflects monthly figures for April, May, June of 3.3%, 2.3% and 2.7% respectively, with a total of 69 days lost through absence.

One member of staff was on long term absence during this period, accounting for a total of 25 days lost. The remaining 44 days lost reflects an absence rate of 1.75 %. One new medical referral was made during the quarter.

In Quarter 2 the 6.11% quarterly average reflects monthly figures for July, August, September of 5.1%, 5.3% and 7.8% respectively, with total of 137 days lost through absence.

One member of staff was on long term absence during this period. One new medical referral was made during the quarter.

The department issues each new member of staff with a copy of the Absence Management Policy and all staff who are off sick require to have a return to work interview conducted by their line manager.

#### 2. Administration

In Quarter 1 the 4.14% quarterly average for non-manual employees reflects monthly figures for April, May and June of 4.64%, 3.86% and 3.99% respectively. The 2.44% average for manual employees reflects monthly figures for April, May and June of 6.54%, 0% and 0% respectively. These quarterly figures reflect 451 days lost during the period for non-manual employees and 7 days lost for manual employees.

Within the manual grouping, one employee accounted for all 7 days lost during the period. Of the non manual employees 3 employees accounted for 195 of the 451 days lost during the period. No new medical referrals were made during the period.

In Quarter 2 the 4.67% quarterly average for non-manual employees reflects monthly figures for July, August and September of 4.41%, 4.79% and 4.76% respectively. There were no manual employee absences in this quarter. These quarterly figures reflect 489 days lost during the period for non-manual employees.

Of the non manual employees 3 employees accounted for 130 of the 489 days lost during the period. Of these, 1 employee returned to work and 1 employee was dismissed on capability grounds. No new medical referrals were made during the period.

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

#### 3. Community Services

Whilst the information from April until August is beneficial for statistical analysis, Community Services have concentrated effort and resources into developing an appropriate action plan for the information which was reported in relation to the September return of Quarter 2

The September figures for non-manual employees of 5.9% reflects a total of 921 days lost through absence, while the figure of 7.46% for manual employees reflects a total of 4997 days lost through absence.

17 non-manual employees were on long term absence (six weeks or more) and these accounted for a total of 336 days lost during the period. The remaining 585 days lost reflect an absence percentage of 3.8%. One new medical referral was made.

51 manual employees were on long term absence (six weeks or more) and these accounted for a total of 959 days lost during the period. The remaining 4038 days lost reflect an absence percentage of 6.0%. 11 new medical referrals were made.

The action plan includes the establishment of an extensive absence management training programme for all relevant department managers to reinforce the principles and practices of effectively managing absence.

The information which is now provided by managers affords senior managers the opportunity of discussing and reviewing individual cases as well as monitoring overall performance and forming conclusions about trends.

#### **4. Construction Services**

In Quarter 1, the 4.17% average (staff) reflects monthly figures for April, May and June of 4.03%, 4.01% and 4.42% respectively.

The 11.53% (manual employees) reflects the monthly figures for April, May and June of 11.74%, 11.72% and 11.17% respectively.

The quarterly figure for staff of 4.17% represents a total of 644 days lost through absence while the figure of 11.53% for manual employees reflects a total of 6097 days lost through absence.

81 employees were on long term absence (six weeks or more) during the period and these accounted for a total of 4802 days lost during the period. The remaining 1939 days were short term absences and reflect an absence percentage of 2.84%.

30 new medical referrals were made during the period while 25 cases were concluded with 3 employees returning to work, 8 dismissed on the grounds of capability, 11 retiring on ill health grounds and 3 employees transferred to another employer.

In Quarter 2 the 4.42% quarterly average (staff) reflects monthly figures for July, August and September of 3.99%, 3.46% and 6.21% respectively.

The 11.18% quarterly average (manual employees) reflects the monthly figures for July, August and September of 10.50%, 10% and 13.31% respectively.

The quarterly figure for staff employees of 4.42% represents a total of 648 days lost through absence.

76 employees were on long term absence (six weeks or more) during the period and these accounted for a total of 3672 days lost during the period. The remaining 2064 days were short term absences and reflect an absence percentage of 3.44%.

22 new medical referrals were made during the period while 28 cases were concluded with 20 returning to work, 2 dismissed on grounds of capability, 5 retiring on ill health grounds and 1 employee resigning.

The absence rates for both categories of employee groups are decreasing and the department is endeavouring to reduce these further during the next quarter.

## **5. Education**

The Quarter 1, 4.1% quarterly average for non manual employees and teachers reflects monthly figures for April, May and June 2000 of 4.47%, 4.21% and 3.76% respectively.

The quarterly figure for non manual employees and teachers of 4.1% reflects a total of 10133 days lost through absence (APT&C employees 4.64% reflects 3147 days lost, Teachers is 3.9% which reflects 6986 days lost) while the figure for manual employees reflects a total of 115 days lost through absence.

115 members of staff out of a total workforce of 5885 (1.95%) were on long term absence (six weeks or more) during the period (73 teaching/42 non teaching employees) and these accounted for a total of 5508 days lost during the period. The remaining 4625 days lost reflect an absence percentage of 1.85%. 13 new medical referrals were made during the period while 1 case has now been concluded with 0 employees returning to work, 1 being dismissed on the capability grounds.

As the figure reflects, the department has 115 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 the Department is shedding teaching posts and employing fewer younger teachers.

The Quarter 2, 3.25% quarterly average for non manual employees and teachers reflects monthly figures for July, August and September 2000 of 5.25%, 2.56% and 3.47% respectively.

The quarterly figure for non manual employees and teachers of 3.25% reflects a total of 4987 days lost through absence (APT&C employees 3.9% reflects 2072 days lost, Teachers is 2.87% which reflects 2915 days lost) while the figure of 5.80% for manual employees reflects a total of 90 days lost through absence.

61 members of staff out of a total workforce of 5975 (1.02%) were on long term absence (six weeks or more) during the period (35 teaching/26 non teaching employees) and these accounted for a total of 2990 days lost during the period. The remaining 2087 days lost reflect an absence percentage of 1.33%. 6 new medical referrals were made during the period while 10 cases have now been concluded with 2 employees returning to work, 6 ill health retirements, 1 early retirement and 1 resignation.

As the figure reflects, the department has 61 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 the Department is 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**

In Quarter 1 the 4.55% quarterly average reflects monthly figures for April, May, and June of 4.8%, 4.1% and 4.77% respectively.

The quarterly figure for non manual employees of 4.55% reflects a total of 810 days lost through absence.

13 members of staff who have been on long term absence (six weeks or more) account for 363 days. The remaining 447 days reflect an absence percentage of 2.51%.

During the period there were three new medical referrals, while 9 cases have now been concluded with 4 employees on a phased return to work, 3 have returned full time and 1 resigned.

The overall absence level of 4.55% is consistent with the previous period and is mainly due to long term absence.

In Quarter 2 the 4.94% quarterly average reflects monthly figures for July, August and September of 4.72%, 4.80% and 5.33% respectively.

The quarterly figure for non manual employees of 4.94% reflects a total of 843 days lost through absence.

13 members of staff who have been on long term absence (six weeks or more) account for 531 days. The remaining 312 days reflect an absence percentage of 1.8%.

During the period there were two new medical referrals.

The slight increase in quarter 2 is as a result of further long term absences.

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. All long term absences are referred for a medical following an interview with the employee concerned. Short term absences are interviewed on return to work and details included in the "return to work" report. As a matter of course, the position is monitored on an ongoing basis.

## **7. Housing & Property Services**

In Quarter 1, the 6.5% and 8.81% average (APT & C and manual respectively) for the first quarter reflects monthly figures for April, May and June 2000 of 6.7%, 6.4% and 6.4% (APT & C) and 8.1%, 9.6% and 8.8% (manual).

The quarterly figure of 6.5% for non-manual employees reflects a total of 715 days lost whilst the figure of 8.81% for manual employees reflects a total of 737 days lost through absence. 3 new medical referrals were made during the period whilst no employees left the department through ill health.

In comparison to Quarter 4 statistics (January –March 2000), Quarter 1 has shown a decrease in relation to APT & C staff with an increase in manual staff.

In Quarter 2 the 5.9 % and 9.0% quarterly averages (APT & C and manual respectively) reflect monthly figures for July, August and September 2000 of 5.7%, 5.8% and 6.3% (APT & C) and 8.7%, 10.3% and 7.9% (manual) respectively.

The quarterly figure of 5.9% for non-manual employees reflects a total of 1814 days lost whilst the figure of 9.0% for manual employees reflects a total of 726 days lost through absence. Two new medical referrals were made during the period whilst 1 employee left the department through ill health.

In comparison to the previous quarter, there has been a decrease in relation to APT & C 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**

In Quarter 1 the 4.4% quarterly average reflects monthly figures for April, May and June of 4.6%, 3.8% and 4.9% respectively.

The quarterly figure for non manual employees of 4.4% reflects a total of 882 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 368 days lost during the period. The remaining 514 days lost reflect an absence percentage of 2.6%.

Of the above cases, 6 have now been concluded with 5 employees returning to work and 1 ill health retiral. The remaining 3 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 Department's overall statistics and the statistics excluding staff on long term absence.

In Quarter 2 the 5% quarterly average reflects monthly figures for July, August, and September of 5%, 4.5% and 5.5% respectively and a total of 983 days lost through absence.

During this quarter, 10 members of staff were on long term absence (six weeks or more) and these accounted for a total of 471 days lost during the period. The remaining 482 days lost reflect an absence percentage of 2.6%.

Of the above cases, 7 have now been concluded with 6 employees returning to work and 1 retiral. The remaining 3 cases are subject to ongoing review and management by Departmental managers and, where appropriate, in conjunction with Personnel services.

There were 4 new medical referrals made during the period.

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

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 Absence figures for the first quarter of 2000/2001 show an average of 7.1% which breaks down into monthly figures of 7.49%, 6.93%, 6.84%. This shows a steady downward trend although concern remains at the level of longer term absence in our residential homes.

In the second quarter the average absence level has risen slightly to 7.2% and this breaks down into monthly figures of 6.82%, 7.53%, 7.23%. There was a rise from July to August, however the downward trend has resumed in September.

There has also been an increase in shorter term absence during this period however this is now reducing. There is continued concern at the high levels of long term absence in the residential sector.

Council Absence Management Procedures are enforced in all areas and further investigations are currently being undertaken to identify any underlying reasons for long term absence. There are no



specific causes of absence identified. However it is noted that instances of stress tend to lead to longer term absence rather than short periods. Assistance is being sought in this area to identify potential causes of stress before it leads to absence and to provide appropriate assistance to minimise resultant absences.