

**EXCERPT OF MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE PERSONNEL SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD ON
4 APRIL 2001**

ABSENCE MANAGEMENT POLICY - STATISTICS FROM OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2000

40. There was submitted an amended report dated 14 March 2001 by the Head of Personnel Services (1) providing absence statistics together with a commentary detailing the breakdown of the figures within departments of the Council for the period from October to December 2000 for manual/craft employees, non-manual staff and teachers and providing a comparison with the statistics for April to December 1999, and (2) advising of a new statutory performance indicator introduced by the Accounts Commission and the action taken by the Corporate Management Team regarding the Council's position in the league tables.

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 departments.

REPORT

To: PERSONNEL SERVICES COMMITTEE		Subject: ABSENCE MANAGEMENT STATISTICS OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2000
From: HEAD OF PERSONNEL SERVICES		
Date: 14 MARCH 2001	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 Quarter 3 of the financial Year 2000/2001 and provide comparison with Quarters 1, 2 & 3 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 1999/2000.

	Manual 1999 1 2000	Manual 2000 1 2001	Non Manual 1999 1 2000	Non Manual 2000 1 2001	Teachers 1999 1 2000	Teachers 2000 1 2001	Overall 1999 1 2000	Overall 2000 1 2001
Working Days	1024410	797137	857029	1103242	403500	501425	2284939	2401804
Absence Days	92030	64698	48622	69060	18798	19751	159450	153509
% Absence Qtr 3	9.19	8.12	5.96	6.26	5.38	3.94	7.12	6.39
%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. 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.
- 2.4 The Accounts Commission introduced a new corporate statutory performance indicator covering sickness absence and this was reported on for the first time at the end of 1999/2000. The figures submitted by North Lanarkshire Council were not able to be fully validated by Internal Audit due to errors in recording in some services and the figures were qualified as unreliable data.
- 2.5 The Accounts Commission has recently published tables covering all of their performance indicators. In relation to the sickness absence indicators, and notwithstanding the impact of errors in recording, the Council's position in the league tables is a cause for concern. The Corporate Management Team is currently reviewing the approach taken across the Council in relation to absence management to ensure that all possible steps are taken to improve attendance and reduce the Council's absence statistics.

3 Recommendation

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

Aris Dylie

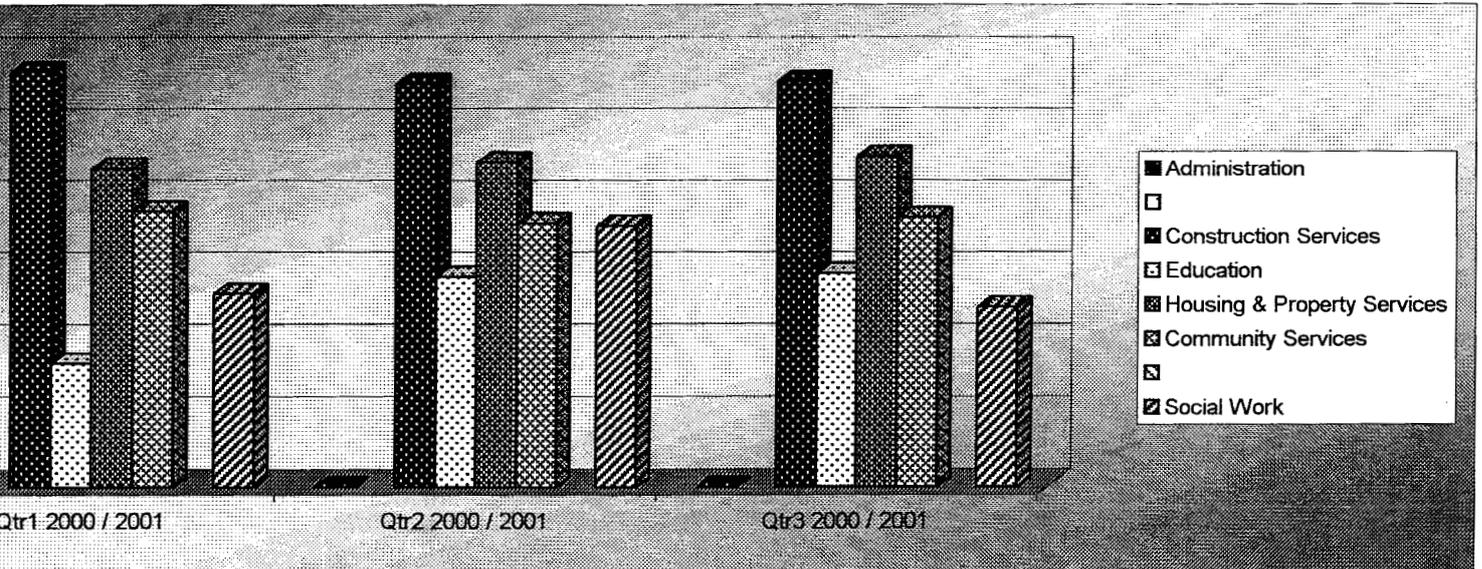
Head of Personnel Services

Manual and Craft

Absence Analysis Statistics April 2000 to December 2000

Comparison with April 1999 to December 1999

	Qtr4 1999 / 2000	Qtr1 1999 / 2000	Qtr1 2000 / 2001	Qtr2 1999 / 2000	Qtr2 2000 / 2001	Qtr3 1999 / 2000	Qtr3 2000 / 2001
es	19.63	27.37	2.44	18.31	0.00	9.41	0.00
Services	11.45	14.73	11.53	12.54	11.18	14.46	11.25
s	4.83	1.57	3.42	0.74	5.80	3.18	5.89
	7.54	6.38	8.81	4.93	8.99	5.25	9.15
	11.16	7.91	7.62	7.35	7.29	8.17	7.44
	10.39	8.34	5.34	9.25	7.22	8.62	4.96

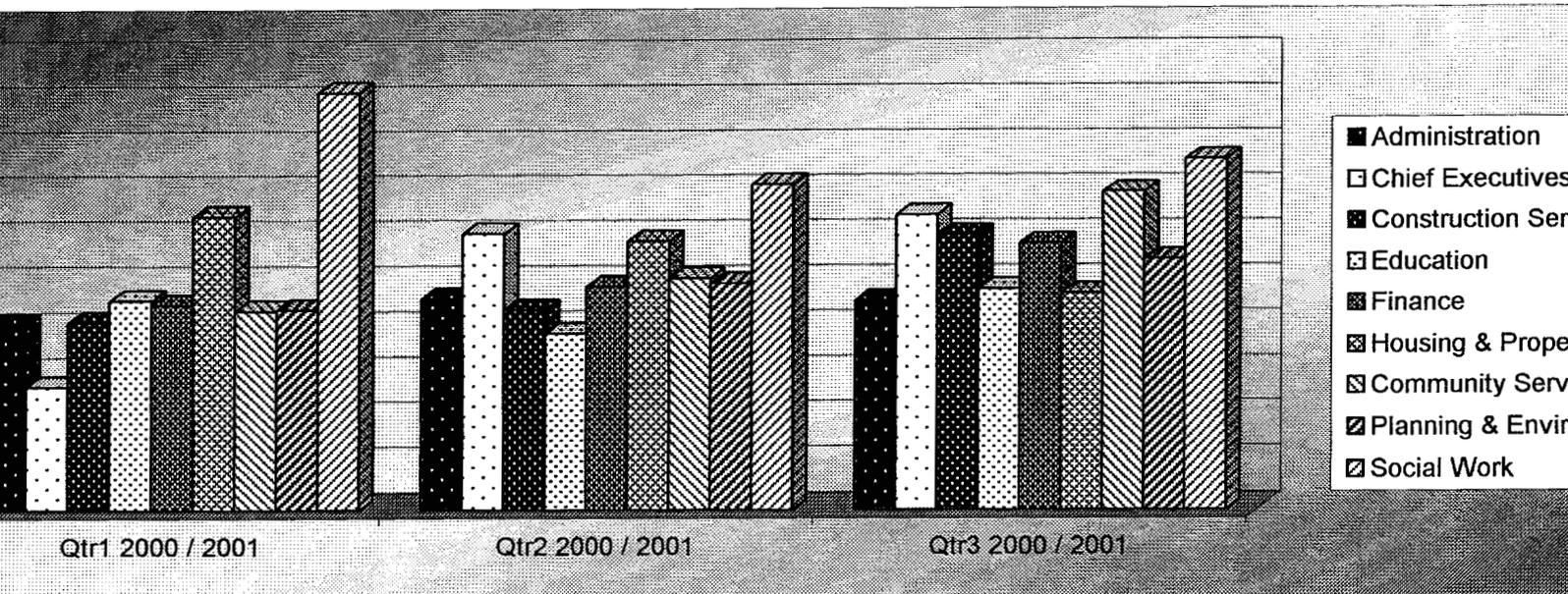


Non Manual Staff

Absence Analysis April 2000 to December 2000

Comparison with April 1999 to December 1999

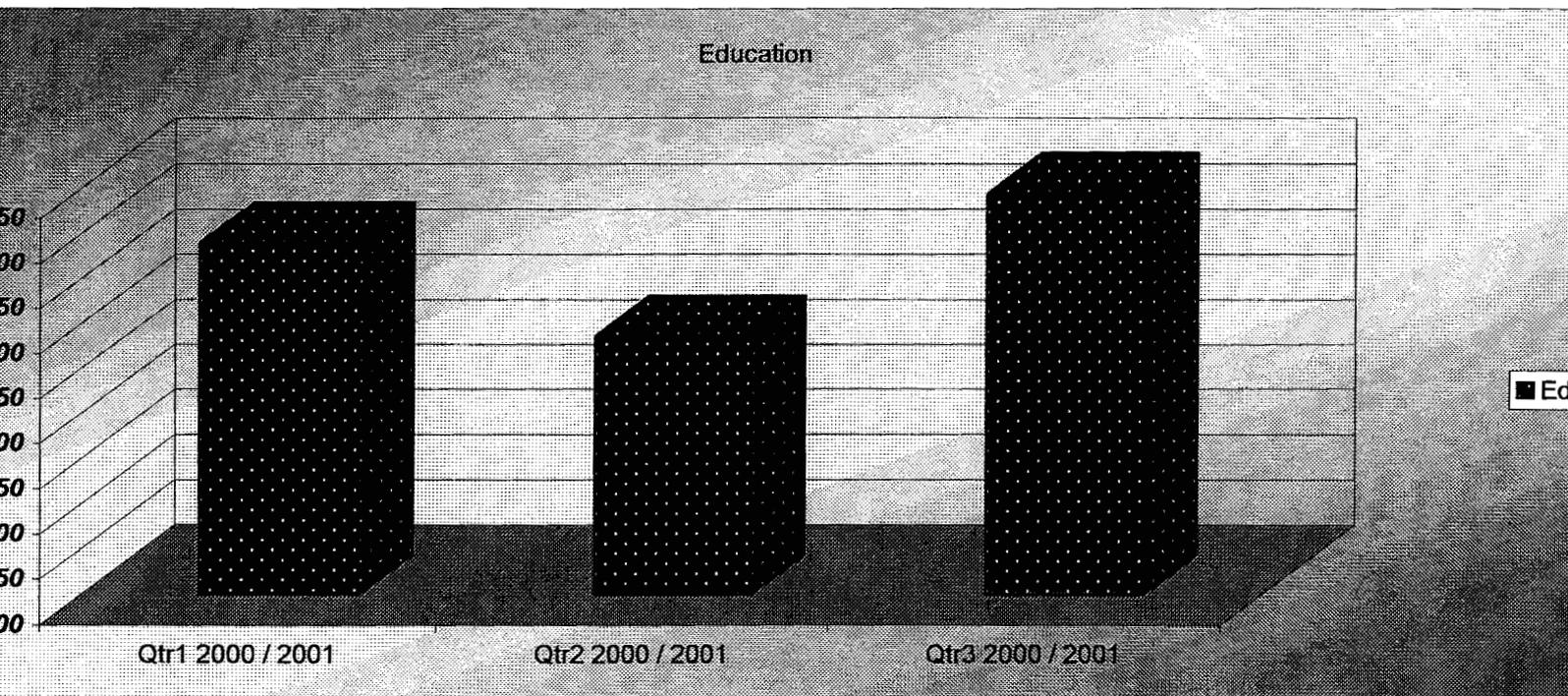
	Qtr4 1999 / 2000	Qtr1 1999 / 2000	Qtr1 2000 / 2001	Qtr2 1999 / 2000	Qtr2 2000 / 2001	Qtr3 1999 / 2000	Qtr3 2000 / 2001
Services	5.97	5.46	4.14	2.84	4.67	5.18	4.62
	4.33	1.89	2.75	3.00	6.11	9.35	6.51
	6.66	6.59	4.17	5.46	4.42	6.21	6.06
	5.65	7.44	4.64	5.24	3.90	5.91	4.87
Community Services Environment	5.16	4.54	4.55	4.77	4.94	5.07	5.88
	4.95	4.59	6.49	3.84	5.95	5.25	4.77
	4.38	5.00	4.40	5.61	5.12	5.80	7.02
	5.87	5.19	4.43	4.49	5.01	6.06	5.53
	7.66	6.09	9.24	6.48	7.20	6.49	7.74



Absence Analysis April 2000 to December 2000 Education - Teachers

Comparison with April 1999 to December 1999

	Qtr4 1999 / 2000	Qtr1 1999 / 2000	Qtr1 2000 / 2001	Qtr2 1999 / 2000	Qtr2 2000 / 2001	Qtr3 1999 / 2000	Qtr3 2000 / 2001
	5.23	4.14	3.91	3.99	2.87	5.38	4.45



APPENDIX 2.

COMMENTARY ON ABSENCE STATISTICS BY DEPARTMENT (QUARTER 3 OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2000)

1. Chief Executive's

In Quarter 3, the 6.3% quarterly average reflects monthly figures for October, November and December of 6.2%, 6.9% and 6.4% respectively. The quarterly figure for non manual employees of 6.5% reflects a total of 161 days lost through absence.

Three members of staff were on long term absence during this period (6 weeks or more). Excluding long term absence, the monthly figures for October, November and December are 2.2%, 2%, and 1.7% respectively with a quarterly figure of 2%. No medical referrals were 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 3, the 4.62% quarterly average for non-manual employees reflects monthly figures for October, November and December of 4.6%, 4.5% and 4.7% respectively. These quarterly figures reflect 511 days lost during the period for non-manual employees. There were no days lost by manual employees during this period

Of the non manual employees, 7 employees accounted for 336 of the 511 days lost during the period. Of these employees, 1 left through voluntary redundancy and 4 have now returned to work. No new medical referrals were made during this period.

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

3. Community Services

The Department has continued its sustained programme of developing and refining absence management through management training, staff awareness, and consultation with the Council's Medical Adviser.

Although generating extensive work and requiring significant management resources, the more refined system of absence recording has enabled the Department to analyse the information more effectively to tackle areas of particular concern. The effectiveness of this is evident within certain services where a targeted programme of training and awareness has significantly contributed to a downward absence trend.

While it is evident that considerable effort is required to further improve departmental absence levels, it is equally important to acknowledge the effort and commitment of those employees who have good levels of attendance. For example, over 1500 employees had perfect attendance during 2000, and it is intended that each employee concerned will be congratulated on this excellent record.

The October figures for non-manual employees of 7.2% reflect a total of 1273 days lost through absence, while the figure of 7.9% for manual employees reflects a total of 5898 days lost through absence.

8 non manual employees were on long term absence (six weeks or more) and these accounted for a total of 176 days lost during the period. The remaining 1097 days lost reflect an absence percentage of 6.21%.

42 manual employees were on long term absence (six weeks or more) and these accounted for a total of 791 days lost during the period. The remaining 5107 days lost reflect an absence percentage of 6.8%.

The November figures for non-manual employees of 6.9% reflect a total of 1261 days lost through absence, while the figure of 7.3% for manual employees reflects a total of 5757.5 days lost through absence.

18 non manual employees were on long term absence (six weeks or more) and these accounted for a total of 357 days lost during the period. The remaining 904 days lost reflect an absence percentage of 4.9%.

46 manual employees were on long term absence (six weeks or more) and these accounted for a total of 838 days lost during the period. The remaining 4919.5 days lost reflect an absence percentage of 6.2%.

The December figures for non-manual employees of 7.2% reflect a total of 1030 days lost through absence, while the figure of 7.1% for manual employees reflects a total of 4654 days lost through absence.

11 non manual employees were on long term absence (six weeks or more) and these accounted for a total of 196 days lost during the period. The remaining 834 days lost reflect an absence percentage of 5.6%.

33 manual employees were on long term absence (six weeks or more) and these accounted for a total of 629 days lost during the period. The remaining 4025 days lost reflect an absence percentage of 6.18%.

4. Construction Services

In Quarter 3, the 6.06% average (staff) reflects monthly figures for October, November and December of 5.33%, 6.07% and 7.01% respectively.

The 11.25% (manual employees) reflects the monthly figures for October, November and December of 11.62%, 10.30% and 12.07% respectively.

The quarterly figure for staff of 6.06% represents a total of 907 days lost through absence while the figure of 11.25% for manual employees reflects a total of 5015 days lost through absence.

64 employees were on long term absence (six weeks or more) during the period and these accounted for a total of 4044 days lost during the period. The remaining 1878 days were short term absences and reflect an absence percentage of 3.15%.

19 new medical referrals were made during the period while 47 cases were concluded with 23 employees returning to work, 9 dismissed on the grounds of capability, 6 retiring on ill health grounds, 1 employee resigning and 8 employees accepting voluntary severance.

December figures include sickness for employees who transferred to Amey Roads (North Lanarkshire) in December, up to the date of transfer on 10 December 2000.

The absence for both categories of employee groups increased during the last month of the quarter due to short term absences.

5. Education

In Quarter 3, the 4.60% quarterly average reflects monthly figures for October, November and December 2000 of 3.76%, 4.96% and 4.99% respectively.

The quarterly figure for non manual employees of 4.91% reflects a total of 5336 days lost through absence (APT&C employees 4.86% reflects 5008 days lost, Teachers is 4.45% which reflects 9850 days lost) while the figure of 5.88% for manual employees reflects a total of 328 days lost through absence.

89 members of staff out of a total workforce of 6132 (1.43%) were on long term absence (six weeks or more) during the period (54 teaching/35 non teaching employees) and these accounted for a total of 5117 days lost during the period. The remaining 10069 days lost reflect an absence percentage of 3.05%. 7 new medical referrals were made during the period while 8 cases have now been concluded with 7 employees returning to work and 1 employee retiring on ill health grounds. There were no dismissals on capability grounds.

As the figure reflects, the department had 89 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.

6. Finance

In Quarter 3, the 5.88% quarterly average reflects monthly figures for October, November and December of 4.72%, 6.58% and 6.43% respectively.

The quarterly figure of 5.88% reflects a total of 1042 days lost through absence.

9 members of staff who have been on long term absence (six weeks or more) account for 313 days. The remaining 729 days reflect an absence percentage of 2.51%.

During the period, there were 2 new medical referrals, while 2 cases have now been concluded with 2 employees returning to work on a phased basis.

The overall absence level of 5.88% is higher than the previous period and is mainly due to long term absence and winter ailments.

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

In Quarter 3, the 4.8% and 9.1% quarterly average (APT & C and manual respectively) reflects monthly figures for October, November and December 2000 of 4.6%, 4.1% and 5.8% (APT & C) and 11.4%, 7.7% and 8.4% (manual).

The quarterly figure of 4.8% for non-manual employees reflects a total of 1530 days lost whilst the figure of 9.1% for manual employees reflects a total of 694 days lost through absence. 6 new medical referrals were made during the period, 2 employees left the department through ill health and 2 employees resigned.

18 members of staff were on long term absence (6 weeks or more).

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 3, the 5.5% quarterly average reflects monthly figures for October, November and December of 5.3%, 5% and 6.4% respectively and a total of 1123 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 601 days lost during the period. The remaining 522 days lost reflect an absence percentage of 2.6%.

Of the above cases, 5 have now been concluded with 5 employees returning to work. The remaining 5 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.

9. Social Work

The Absence figures for quarter 3 of 2000/2001 show an average of 7.74% which breaks down into monthly figures of 7.87%, 7.67%, 7.69%. Particular concern remains at the level of longer term absence in residential homes although there was a small drop from October to December.

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 single specific causes of absence identified. 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.