

ANGUS COUNCIL

RESOURCES AND CENTRAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

1 SEPTEMBER 2005

SICKNESS ABSENCE 2004/05

REPORT BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

ABSTRACT

This report analyses sickness absence within the Council during the 2004/05 financial year.

1. RECOMMENDATION

The Committee note the terms of this report:

2. BACKGROUND

The Personnel and Property Services Committee on 2 September 1997 noted that the Personnel Services Manager would prepare an annual report on sickness absence within the Council.

As the Committee is aware, throughout the year quarterly reports are submitted to Committee indicating, for specific employee categories as well as for the Council as a whole: the number of days lost; the percentage of days lost against available working days; and, the average days lost per employee. These quarterly reports also illustrate in percentage terms total days lost through absences of one day, absences of two to five days, absences of more than five days and, incidences of absence of one, two to five and more than five days.

This annual report summarises the information which has been submitted to Committee on a quarterly basis and analyses the absence data for the Council for the 2004/05 financial year.

The report also provides an analysis of the reasons and costs of sickness absence in 2004/05.

3. SICKNESS ABSENCE 2004/05

It should be noted that the employee categories used differs from previous years. This is because the Accounts Commission, for whom these figures are also collated for Statutory Performance Indicator purposes, has amended the definitions as a consequence of the single status agenda which no longer differentiates between APT&C and Manual employees. These categories are now merged with employees on Chief Officials conditions of service under the category Local Government Employees (LGE).

As a result of the reclassification in this year's annual report the only previous year figures used for comparison purposes are for total council employees.

It should also be noted that the figures for craft employees are based on a staffing level of 7.

Number of Working Days Lost

Table 1 identifies the number of working days lost for LGE, craft employees and teachers with aggregated totals. For comparison purposes the table also shows, in italics, the quarterly and annual total figures for 2003/04.

<i>Table 1</i>	Apr – Jun 04	Jul – Sept 04	Oct – Dec 04	Jan – Mar 05	Total	<i>Total 03/04</i>
LGE	8474	8968	9735	10774	37951	-
Craft	4	46	37	0	87	-
Teachers	1980	1493	2582	3124	9179	-
Total	10458	10507	12354	13898	47217	42670
<i>Total 03/04</i>	<i>10380</i>	<i>9247</i>	<i>10779</i>	<i>12264</i>	<i>42670</i>	

Appendix 1a illustrates in graphic format the total working days lost for all employees for 2004/05 and also charts the comparative figures for 2003/04.

The figures for 2004/05 show an overall increase in the number of working days lost when compared to 2003/04 of 4547 days.

Percentage of Days Lost

Table 2 expresses the above figures as a percentage of days lost against available working days. For comparison purposes the table also shows, in italics, the quarterly and annual total figures for 2003/04.

<i>Table 2</i>	Apr – Jun 04	Jul – Sept 04	Oct – Dec 04	Jan – Mar 05	Total	<i>Total 03/04 %</i>
	%	%	%	%	%	
LGE	4.12	4.64	4.86	5.31	4.73	-
Craft	0.82	10.49	8.04	0.00	4.72	-
Teachers	2.96	3.53	4.19	4.36	3.79	-
Total	3.83	4.45	4.71	5.06	4.51	4.13
<i>Total 03/04</i>	<i>4.03</i>	<i>4.15</i>	<i>4.17</i>	<i>4.17</i>	<i>4.13</i>	

As the comparison shows the overall percentage of days lost has increased from 4.13% in 2003/04 to 4.51% in 2004/05.

Appendix 1b illustrates in graphic format the percentage of days lost per employee for all employees for 2004/05 and also charts the comparative figures for 2003/04.

Available in the 'Members' Lounge' is an analysis of percentage absence on a department by department basis incorporating the figures for both 2003/04 and 2004/05, and, in bar chart format and again on a department by department basis, an analysis of percentage absence for each quarter of 2004/05.

As the Committee will be aware, the percentage of days lost due to sickness absence is a Statutory Performance Indicator.

The Statutory Performance Indicator is expressed as a percentage for three employee categories: LGE; Craft employees; and Teachers. The figures for Angus Council for 2004/05 which will be published in this regard are: LGE - 4.7% (rounded down from 4.73%) Craft employees - 4.7% (rounded down from 4.72%); and Teachers - 3.8% (rounded up from 3.79%).

Once the Accounts Commission publishes the statutory performance indicator information for 2004/05, direct comparison will be able to be made with other Scottish councils.

In comparing with current UK sickness absence data the most comprehensive and most up to date source available is a survey undertaken by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), published in July 2005. This survey is based on replies from 1,038 organisations employing a total of over 2 million people. The survey reports an average absenteeism rate of 3.7% amongst all employers, 4.8%

within local government and an average rate of 4.4% for all organisations with more than 2,000 employees.

In Angus Council the current comparative figure is 4.51%.

Average Days Lost per Employee

Table 3 identifies the average days lost per employee in each quarter, and overall, for 2004/05. For comparison purposes the table also shows, in italics, the quarterly and annual total figures for 2003/04.

<i>Table 3</i>	Apr – Jun 04	Jul – Sept 04	Oct – Dec 04	Jan – Mar 05	Total	<i>Total 03/04</i>
LGE	2.19	2.25	2.44	2.66	9.54	-
Craft	0.50	5.75	4.63	0.00	10.88	-
Teachers	1.57	1.15	2.07	2.41	7.20	-
Total	2.04	1.99	2.35	2.60	8.98	8.41
<i>Total 03/04</i>	<i>2.09</i>	<i>1.86</i>	<i>2.08</i>	<i>2.38</i>	<i>8.41</i>	

Appendix 1c illustrates in graphic format the average days lost for all employees for 2004/05 and also charts the comparative figures for 2003/04.

The overall figures for both 2003/04 and 2004/05 are shown in bar chart format on a department by department basis in the 'Members' Lounge'.

For the purposes of clarity in 2004/05, on average, absence due to sickness was 8.98 days per employee. The comparative figure for 2003/04 was 8.41 days.

The CIPD survey referred to above indicates a figure of 8.4 days lost per employee per year across the UK.

Incidence of Absence

Incorporated within the quarterly sickness absence reports is a breakdown of absence figures illustrating in percentage terms (a) total days lost through absence of one day, absences of two to five days and absences of more than five days and (b) incidences of absence of one, two to five and more than five days.

Appendix 2 outlines this information for 2004/05 as a whole. The comparative information for 2003/04 is also included in the Appendix.

The average length of each absence was 5.63 days.

Of the single day absences 30% occurred on Mondays.

Cost Of Sickness Absence

In 2004/05 the direct cost of employees' sickness absence to the Council ie the cost of sick pay, was a total of £2,856,022.

This figure comprises statutory sick pay payments of £445,413 and occupational sickness allowance payments of £2,410,609.

The cost of direct sick pay to the Council represents 2.84% (2.86% in 2003/04) of total salary costs.

This represents an annual cost per employee of £453 (£457 in 2003/04) based on staffing numbers as at 31 March 2005. For comparison purposes, the latest CIPD survey referred to above reported an average annual cost per employee of £601 for the public and private sectors combined and £644 within local government.

These figures must be treated with caution as the definition of what to include in the cost calculation varies from employer to employer. Like many organisations which will be included in the CIPD survey the Angus figure excludes costs associated with overtime and the use of temporary labour to cover absence.

There are also hidden costs associated with absence. As illustrated in the Incidences of Absence pie chart in Appendix 2, throughout 2004/05 35% incidences of absence were for one day and 43% for 2 to 5 days. From an operational aspect, short term sickness can cause serious disruption to efficiency at every level of the operation as it inevitably impacts on others attending work and makes it difficult to maintain service delivery standards.

Reasons For Sickness Absence

An analysis of the reasons for sickness absence in 2004/05 and as detailed in Appendix 3 shows that the major causes of absence within the Council, and which account for 60% of all absences, are stress related, lower limbs, stomach, respiratory/circulatory heart, colds/flu and back disorders.

This finding is not dissimilar to various national studies which consistently show the top five causes of absence as being stress, colds/flu, stomach disorders, headaches and back pain.

A comparison with previous analyses of Council information, as evidenced by the table in Appendix 3 shows that in Angus there has been an upward trend in stress as a cause with downward trends in colds/flu, and back disorders as causes of absence.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications associated with the terms of this report.

5. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

There are no human rights implications arising from the terms of this report.

6. CONSULTATION

The Acting Director of Finance and Director of Law & Administration have been consulted on the terms of this report. The Chief Officers' Management Team has been consulted on the content of the report.

D S Sawers
Chief Executive

HR/PersServMan

NOTE No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above Report.

[APPENDIX 1](#)

[APPENDIX 2](#)

APPENDIX 3 - REASONS FOR SICKNESS ABSENCE

	2004/05	2003/04	2000/01	1998/99	1996/97
	%	%	%	%	%
Reasons					
Stress Related	19.91	18.94	17.71	15.47	13.04
Colds/Flu	8.15	10.04	11.28	15.57	17.78
Respiratory/Circulatory/ Heart	8.54	8.63	7.69	6.61	8.22
Stomach Disorders	8.55	7.77	7.91	8.88	13.27
Lower Limb	8.64	7.73	7.06		
Back	6.63	7.16	9.08	11.86	15.04
Upper Limb	3.75	4.30	3.80		
Ear/Nose/Throat	3.05	3.54	6.38		
Gynaecological/Reproductive systems	5.39	3.23	4.29		
Upper Body	2.69	2.38	2.48		
Headaches	1.88	1.99	3.71		
Eye/Face	1.40	1.52	0.88		
Other Reasons	21.42	22.79	17.74		

Note: Incomplete information given for 1998/99 and 1996/97 due to change in categories for recording reasons for sickness absence.