

REPORT TO: Corporate Services Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 3 November 2009

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director - Corporate and Policy

SUBJECT: Sickness Absence – 1st quarter (1 April – 30 June 09)

WARDS: Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

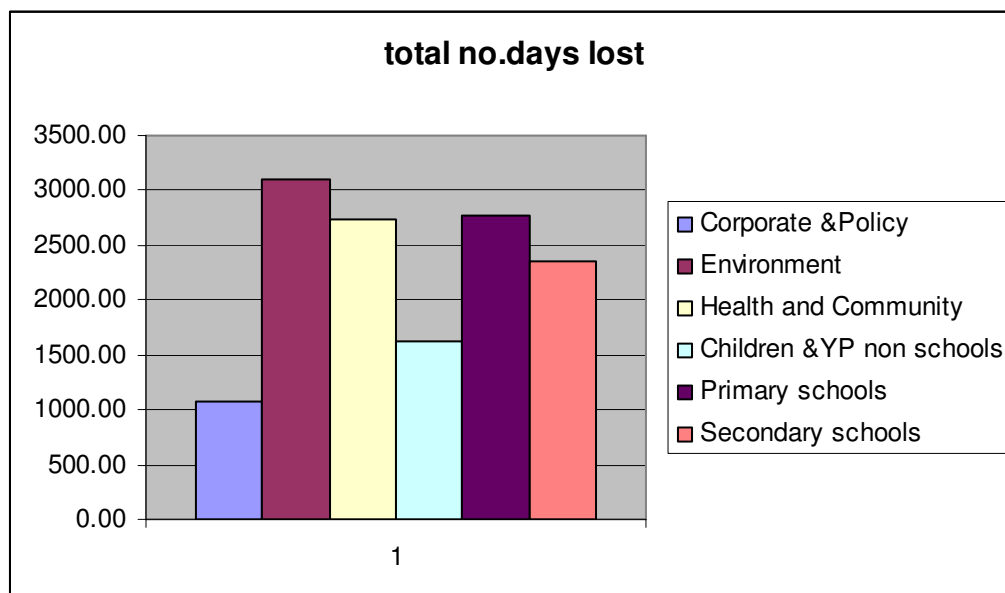
1.1 To provide a report on the number of working days lost in the first quarter of 2009/10, outlining trends and patterns of sickness.

2.0 RECOMMENDED:

(1) That the content of the report be noted

3.0 SICKNESS STATISTICS

3.1.1 The total number of working days lost due to sickness absence, in the first quarter of the year was 13,616. The breakdown for each directorate is set out below;



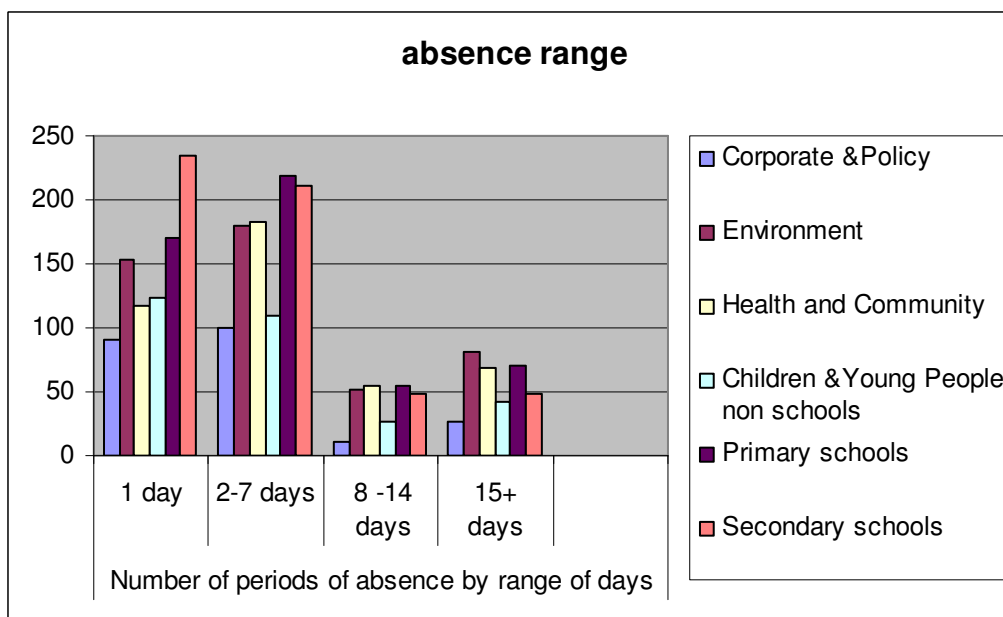
Directorates	Total no.days lost 1 st quarter	% sickness absence
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Corporate &Policy	1065.5	2.69
Environment	3090	4.31
Health and Community	2736	5.56
C&YP non schools	1616	5.12
C&YP schools	5108.5	12.40
Total days lost	13616	

The average number of days lost per employee for the first quarter is 2.52. This figure is based on the number of working days lost (working days/shift) to the Authority due to sickness absence. The Audit Commission guidance on calculating this is based on FTE staff.

- 3.2 Length of absences – the data below shows that 76% of all sickness absences are between 1 and 7 days duration. The Chartered Institute of Personnel Development annual survey report on Absence Management suggests that approximately two thirds of all working time lost to absence is accounted for by short term absence and Halton appears to follow this trend. The research also suggests that minor illnesses such as colds, flu and stomach problems are by some way the main cause for short term absence. Again the reasons for short term absence in Halton reflects the national research. The Assistant Personnel/Welfare Officers continue to work with managers, across the Authority, to support them in managing attendance.

	Number of periods of absence by range of days			
	1 day	2-7 days	8 -14 days	15+ days
Corporate &Policy	91	100	11	26
Environment	153	179	51	82
Health and Community	117	183	54	69
Children &Young People non schools	123	110	27	42
Primary schools	170	218	54	70
Secondary schools	234	211	49	49
Totals	888	1001	246	338



4.0 OBSERVATIONS ON DATA

- 4.1 Members asked at the last meeting that information be provided in respect of both school - based and directorate staff.
- 4.2 In the case of School based staff, the total days lost due to depression, personal stress and work related stress account for 27% of the overall schools absence. The second highest reason for absence amongst school staff was musculo - skeletal followed by chest and respiratory infections. HR are currently delivering training to schools in managing attendance and the Assistant Personnel/Welfare Officer is working closely with schools to support them in resolving absence related issues in line with school policy.
- 4.3 The reasons for absence vary across the directorates. Account should be given to the different sizes of directorates and the nature of work. For example absences due to musculo skeletal problems, back problems and heart problems are the main reasons for absence in the directorates which employ mainly former manual workers. This is reflected in the sickness statistics and does reflect the national trend.
- 4.4 Careful monitoring is being carried out and regular reports will be brought forward. Regular meetings also take place with Risk Management to discuss problem areas as they arise and the Assistant Personnel/Welfare Officers continue to support managers across the Authority in managing attendance.

5.0 LONG TERM SICKNESS ABSENCE

All employees who are currently long term sick are being managed and are all accessing the support of the Occupational Health Unit. The

Assistant Personnel/Welfare Officers are continuing to work pro actively with managers to resolve the number of long term sick cases. Quarterly reviews are undertaken.

6.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 As we continue to monitor sickness absence across the Authority it is envisaged that the Sickness Absence Policy will be reviewed to ensure absence is managed effectively.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 7.1 Failure to monitor absence levels and trends may lead to increased levels of ill health and appropriate support may not be given to employees. This may lead to challenge through Tribunal for disability discrimination or insurance claims.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 8.1 The Council is better protected from future challenge of Disability discrimination or other discrimination if all employees are treated equally and fairly with regard to their sickness absences.

9.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The Chartered Institute Personnel Development (CIPD) national survey of absence management policy and practice (2008) estimate that the average annual cost of absence is £784 per employee per year. Failure to address levels of sickness absence will lead to increasing costs for the authority.

10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act.