

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE : 19 MAY 2005

ABSENCE MANAGEMENT – QUARTER 4 2004 AND QUARTER 1 2005

Report by the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Committee of staff absence rates for Social Services, including Resource Support (Social Work), for the quarterly periods 1st October 2004 ending 31 December 2004 and 1st January 2005 ending 31st March 2005.
- 1.2 Seek Committee endorsement of an outline action plan within social work to address absence.

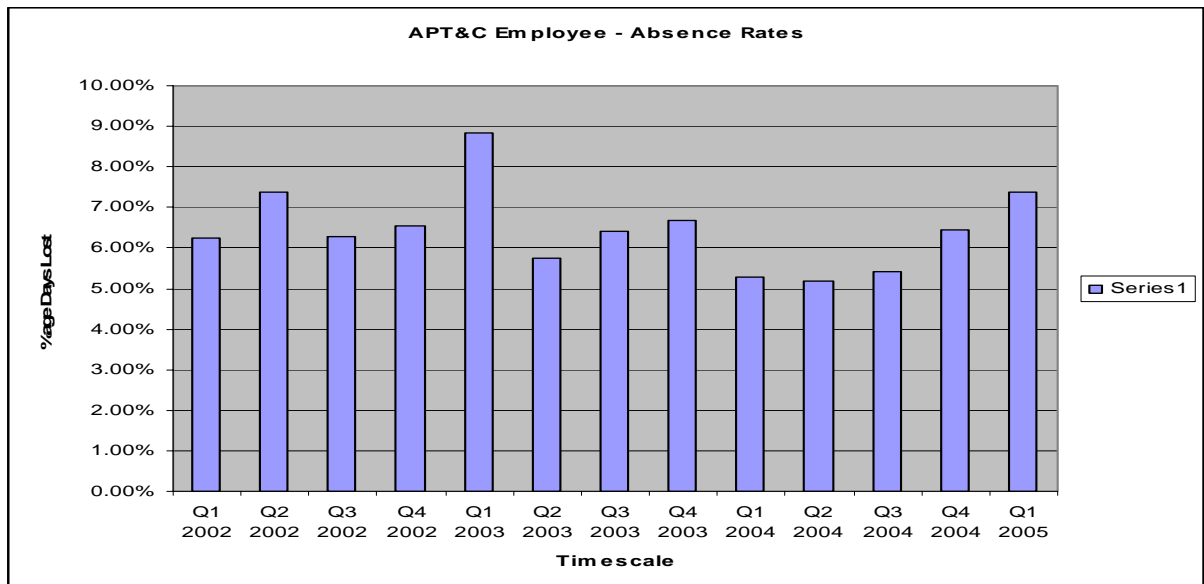
2. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

- 2.1 Historical data for the current reporting period is detailed in tabular form in Appendix 1 to assist members in considering absence rates.

3. ANALYSIS OF QUARTERLY ABSENCE RATES

- 3.1 The Council target for APT & C absence rates is 4%. Analysis of information gathered through the corporate personnel system highlights a total absence rate for Social Services and Resource Support of 6.43% for Quarter 4 2004 and 7.37 % for Quarter 1 2005. Graph 1 (below) compares this with previous quarters in 2002, 2003 and 2004.

3.2 Graph 1 – APT & C Absence Rates for 2002 – 2005



3.3 For Quarter 4 a total of 2,347 working days were lost which is an increase of 377 days on Quarter 3. Of this figure 1,081 days were lost for medically certified absences covering a period of more than 4 weeks.

3.3.1 For Quarter 1 a total of 2,560 working days were lost which is an increase of 213 days on Quarter 4. Of this figure 1,152 days were lost for medically certified absences covering a period of more than 4 weeks.

In Quarter 1 there was a significant increase in the Reception Services & Anti-Poverty absence rate, this rose to 18.15% increase of 11.46% from previous quarter which coincided with a review of the service.

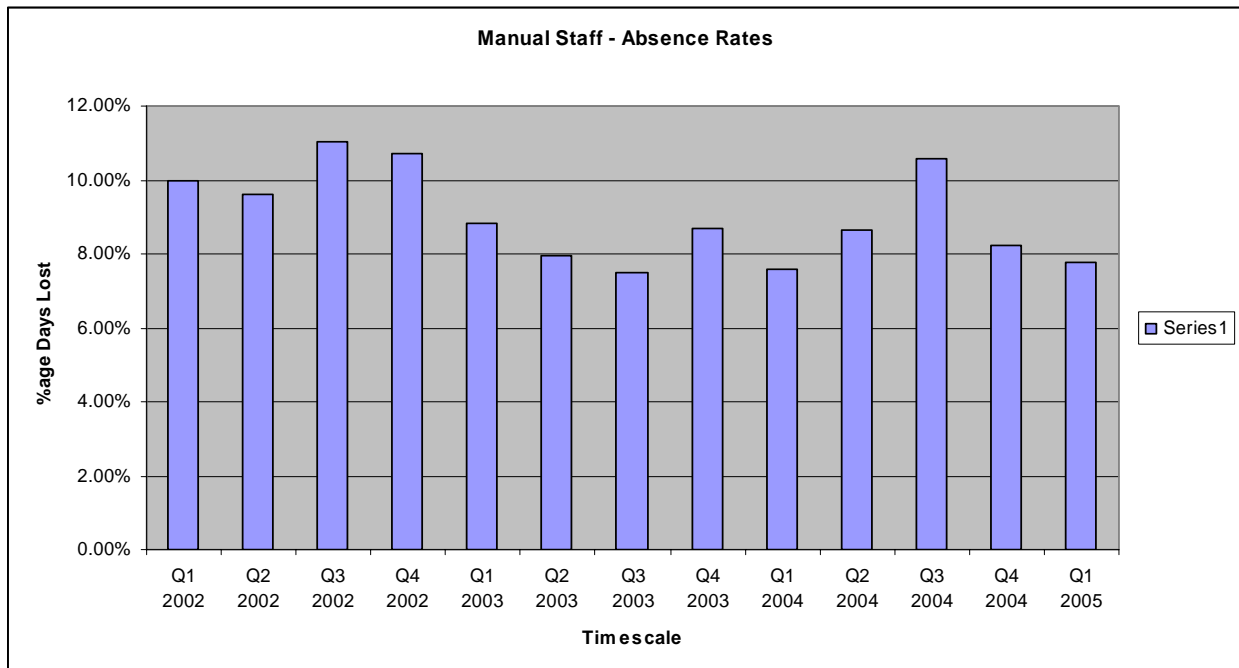
There was an increase of 237 days in quarter 1 for absences related to colds/flu and an increase of 135 days due to viral infections which may be attributed to the time of the year.

In particular 3 Units had a significant increase in absence rates Kilmaurs Unit rose by 18.4%, Independent Living by 17.6% and Balmoral Road Centre by 14.1% which ultimately increased the overall figure.

The residential sector's absence levels have been consistently high. This work is front line and involves significant physical and emotional demands.

3.4 The Council target for Manual absence rate has been set at 5%. The statistics for Quarter 4 show an actual absence rate of 8.21% for this group of staff and 7.79% for Quarter 1 2005. Graph 2 (below) compares this with previous quarters in 2002, 2003, 2004.

3.5 **Graph 2 – Manual Employees Absence Rate for 2002 – 2005**



3.5.1 For Quarter 4 a total of 2,021 days were lost, which represents an overall decrease in Manual staff absences of 396 days. Of this total 1,390 days lost were for medically certified absences covering more than 4 weeks.

3.5.2 For Quarter 1 a total of 1,944 days were lost which is a further decrease of 77 days from Quarter 4. Of this 1143 days were lost for medically certified absences which is a decrease of 247 days from the previous quarter.

4. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

4.1 Long term absence remains a significant issue within the Department.

As previously reported the predominant causes of absence continue to relate to musculo-skeletal, stress and recovery from operations. These issues are similar to previous quarters, however Members will also note that 258 working days in quarter 4 and 257 working days in Quarter 1 have also been lost as a result of heart problems. This is an increase of 37 days on Quarter 3.

4.2 An outline action plan encompassing both Corporate and Departmental initiatives has been developed to address absence within social work. (Appendix 3)

5. FINANCIAL / LEGAL / POLICY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 As there is no budget within Social Services to provide cover for absent staff, and services must be maintained, costs are managed within the total resources available.

5.2 Absenteeism within Educational and Social Services is being actively managed in accordance with Council policy and employment legislation.

6. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Nil.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Committee is asked to:

(i) endorse the outline action plan to address absence within social work (Appendix 3); and

(ii) note the contents of this report.

John Mulgrew
Executive Director of Educational and Social Services
10 May 2005
Enc (3)

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil

Any member wishing further information should contact Jackie Donnelly, Executive Head of Social Work at (01563) 576920.

IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER : JACKIE DONNELLY

SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE – 19TH MAY 2005
ABSENCE MANAGEMENT REPORT – QUARTER 4 2004
HISTORICAL DATA

Comparison between Quarter 3 2004 and Quarter 4 2004

SECTION	Q3 2004 DAYS LOST	Q4 2004 DAYS LOST	% INCREASE/ DECREASE
Community Care	3,435	3243	-5.5%
Children & Families	417	442	+5.9%
Criminal Justice	89	201	+125%
Performance and Development	308	312	+1.2%
Resource Support	136	170	+25%

Comparison between Quarter 4 2003 and Quarter 4 2004

SECTION	Q4 2003 DAYS LOST	Q4 2004 DAYS LOST	% INCREASE/ DECREASE
Community Care	3397	3243	-4.5%
Children & Families	474	442	-6.7%
Criminal Justice	162	201	+24%
Performance and Development	257	312	+21.4%
Resource Support	88	170	+93.1%

SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE – 19TH MAY 2005
ABSENCE MANAGEMENT REPORT – QUARTER 1 2005

HISTORICAL DATA

Comparison between Quarter 4 2004 and Quarter 1 2005

SECTION	Q4 2004 DAYS LOST	Q1 2005 DAYS LOST	% INCREASE/ DECREASE
Community Care	3243	3290	+1.44
Children & Families	442	537	+21.5
Criminal Justice	201	191	-4.9
Performance and Development	312	430	+37.8
Resource Support	170	56	-67.1

Comparison between Quarter 1 2004 and Quarter 1 2005

SECTION	Q1 2004 DAYS LOST	Q1 2005 DAYS LOST	% INCREASE/ DECREASE
Community Care	2858	3290	+15.1
Children & Families	367	537	+46.3
Criminal Justice	136	191	+40.4
Performance and Development	332	430	+29.5
Resource Support	137	56	-59.1

*For Quarter 1 2005 Resource Support has been split between Social Work and Others.

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL
SOCIAL WORK MANAGING ABSENCE
OUTLINE ACTION PLAN

SOCIAL WORK INITIATIVES

1. Improved Notification Systems

- Daily notification from sites on employees absence – more up to date processing accurate reporting.
- Update Review and Follow-Up Form to include days of the week – provide clearer visual pattern at absence meetings.
- 4 weekly reporting to include actual absence cost – including costs for all employees absent (not just long term).
- Consideration of sub dividing absence categories within Social Work e.g. stress, in order to achieve a more in depth analysis of Social Work absence.

2. Support to Frontline Managers

- Highlight the impact of absence on service delivery to frontline managers.
- Demonstrate to them the impact that a proactive absence management approach can have.
- Equip them with the knowledge required to adopt such an approach.
- One to one meetings with line managers to advise on responsibilities in relation to absence management.

3. Direct Management Actions

- Absence meeting at 3rd week of absence prior to 4 weekly Occupational Health Service referral to obtain more background information.
- 4 weekly meetings for all employees with long term absence.
- Improve referral programme to Occupational Health (early intervention)
- Support and monitor managers in conducting return to work interviews, introduce return to work form.

4. Preventative Measures Now In Place

- Development of moving and handling procedures.
- Appointment of moving and handling adviser.
- Improved moving and handling training.
- Stress Awareness toolbox talks have been arranged for all line managers and for all employees who have been absent due to stress.

CORPORATE INITIATIVES

- Employee Counselling
- Referral to the Employee counselling Service can either be by self, independently of the Council outwith working hours or formally via Personnel within working hours.
- Specialist Alcohol and Drug Misuse Counselling.
- Health and Safety Stress Pilot
- Family Friendly policies
- Referral and access to physiotherapy
- Implementation of EAGER
- Work life balance
 - Career break scheme (for childcare, caring or other purposes)
 - Homeworking scheme, (occasional, part week or full week)
 - Flexible working scheme (flexitime, variable working, compressed hours)