

## EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

### SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE – 27 MARCH 2003

#### ABSENCE MANAGEMENT – 1 OCTOBER 2002 to 31 DECEMBER 2002

##### Report by the Director of Educational and Social Services

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Social Work Committee of staff absence rates for Social Services, including Resource Support and Support to Communities, for the quarterly period ending 31 December 2002.

### 2. APT & C EMPLOYEES

- 2.1 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 of 6.54%. Table 1 below compares this information with quarters 1 to 3 of calendar year 2002.

**Table 1 – APT & C Absence Rates for 2002**

<b>Period</b>	<b>%age Days Lost</b>
January – March	6.25%
April – June	7.36%
July – September	6.29%
October – December	6.54%

- 2.2 For the reporting period ended 31 December 2002 a total of 2,424 working days were lost. Of this figure 1,295 days were lost for medically certified absences covering period of more than 4 weeks. Management action continues to be taken, in conjunction with Corporate Personnel, to address the underlying issues of staff absence.
- 2.3 The general trend however is favourable as, with the exception of quarter 2, all periods are below the 7% level. For the previous year (2001) absence rates were 7.26% (period 1), 7.09% (period 2), 8.56% (period 3) and 7.05% (period 4).

### 3. MANUAL EMPLOYEES

- 3.1 The Council target for Manual absence rate has been set at 5%. The statistics for quarter 4 highlight an absence rate of 10.69%. Table 2 below details the information for the calendar year 2002.

**Table 2 – Manual Employees Absence Rate for 2002**

<b>Period</b>	<b>%age Days Lost</b>
January – March	9.99%
April – June	9.62%
July – September	11.05%
October – December	10.69%

- 3.2 For the reporting period of the total 2,160 days lost 1,681 were for medically certified absences covering more than 4 weeks. As with APT & C staff the Director continues to take positive action to reduce these statistics.
- 3.3 For Manual employees the trend for 2002 shows an adverse trend when compared with 2001. Figures available for 2001 show absence rates of 10.91% (period 1), 9.25% (period 2), 7.90% (period 3) and 8.52% (period 4).

### 4. OBSERVATIONS

- 4.1 A significant amount of activity is in place to manage staff absence levels within the department. Directorate staff and other senior managers work closely with the Head of Personnel to ensure the implementation of corporate absence procedures and support for all employees.
- 4.2 This work has resulted in the following initiatives:
- (i) restructuring of the Personnel Section, with new team members specialising in absence management;
  - (ii) earlier referrals to the Occupational Health Service;
  - (iii) increased involvement of the Occupational Health Advisor with health screening and workplace assessments;
  - (iv) the introduction of an Occupational Health Physiotherapist;
  - (v) additional counselling sessions purchased from Employee Counselling Service;
  - (vi) individual case discussions with Personnel, Occupational Health and line managers to ensure an integrated and multi-disciplinary approach to absence management;

- (vii) phased returns to work, including restricted/different duties on a temporary basis

## **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.

## **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.1 Committee is asked to:

- (i) agree to the Director and senior officers continuing to take appropriate action to ensure support mechanisms are available for staff to assist the reduction of absence levels; and
- (ii) otherwise note the contents of this report.

John Mulgrew  
Director of Educational and Social Services

EC/JBS  
10 March 2003

### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Nil

Any member wishing further information should contact Euan Couperwhite, Head of Resource Support at (01563) 576090.

**IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER : EUAN COUPERWHITE**