

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by Executive Director of Corporate Services

Corporate and Efficient Governance Committee – 25 November 2009

Subject: Sickness Absence Reporting – Quarter 2 (2009/2010)

1. Purpose

1.1 To advise the Corporate and Efficient Governance Committee on the levels of employee sickness absence for the second quarter (July, August and September) of 2009/2010.

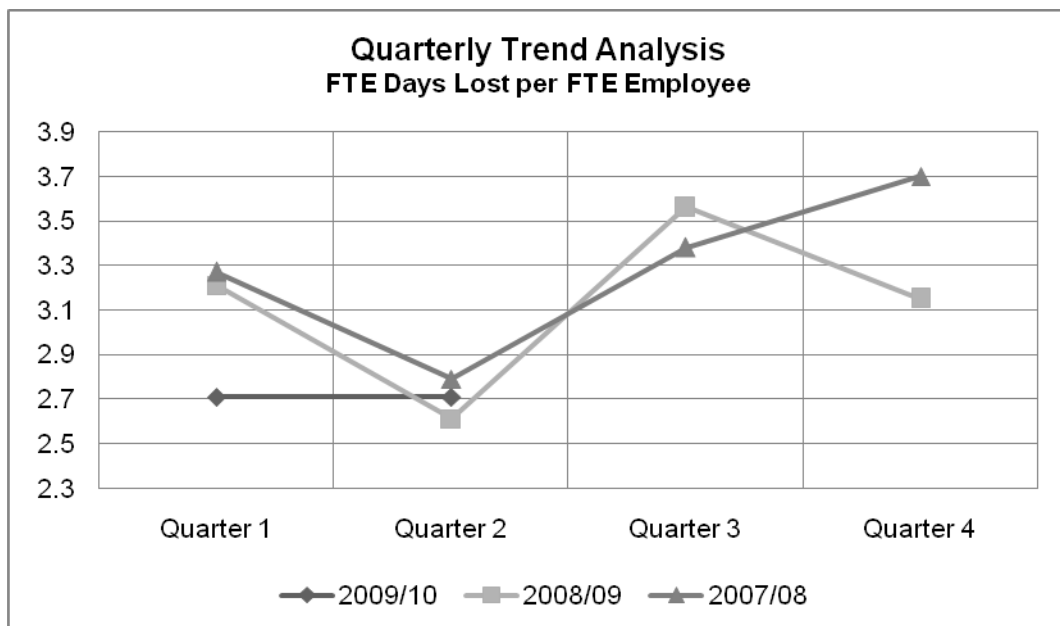
1.2 It should be noted that there were a number of Educational establishments that were unable to provide a quarterly return in time for the 20th October deadline and have been excluded from the Educational Services figures for both Teachers and APT&C staff. These were:

- Specialist Teachers
- Andrew B Cameron Nursery
- St Peters EECC

2. Sickness Absence Statistics

Trend Analysis

2.1 The graph below details the quarterly total FTE days lost per FTE employee for West Dunbartonshire Council for the year 2009/10 and compares it to the previous 2 years (2008/09 and 2007/08),



2.2 The previous 2 years figures have been used as comparators to show that the reported figure for Quarter 1 2009/10 does not fit the expected trend. The current year Quarter 1 figure is lower than expected.

Statutory Performance Indicators

2.3 One of the annual Statutory Performance Indicators that West Dunbartonshire Council reports on to Audit Scotland is in terms of sickness absence. Corporate Human Resources and Organisational Development collate the sickness absence statistics on a quarterly basis and further analyse these into yearly statistics. Audit Scotland requires the figures to be separated into 2 categories: Local Government Employees and Teachers.

2.4 The total FTE days lost per FTE employee for 2008/2009 were:

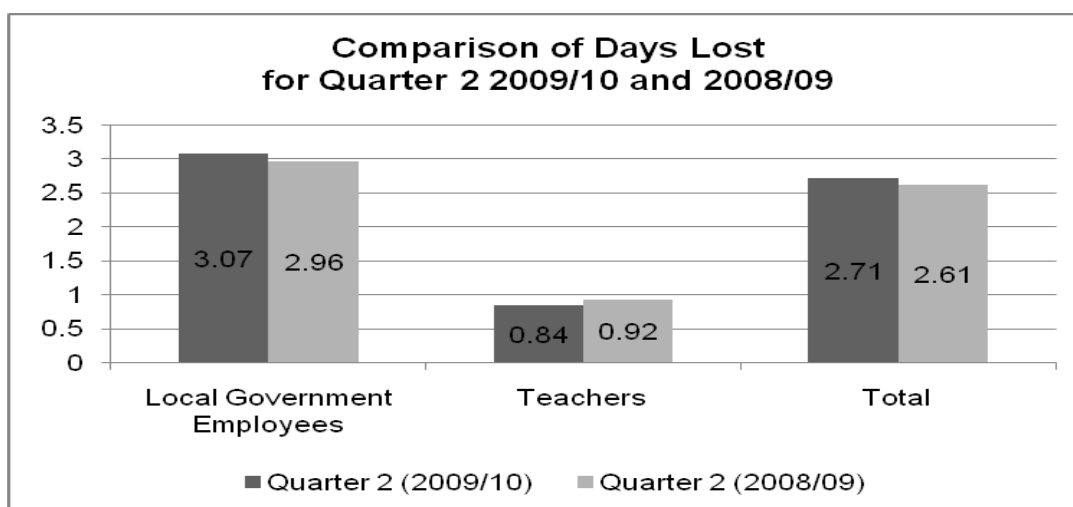
	Figure Reported for 2008/2009	Target set for 2009/2010
Local Government Employees	13.61	13
Teachers	7.05	6.5
Council-wide	12.48	12

2.5 A realistic reduction of around 0.5 FTE days was set. If the current trend continues the Council-wide figure for this year could potentially be around 11 FTE days lost per FTE employee, which would be an improvement on the target. However, it is important to note that this estimate does not take into account the higher levels of sickness absence during winter months or the anticipated impact of swine flu on attendance levels.

2.6 The national average for the public sector of days lost per employee is 9.7 days (as reported by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development – 2009). The CIPD have also reported that Scotland tends to report higher levels of sickness absence than the rest of the UK with an average of 10.1 days per employee.

Days Lost

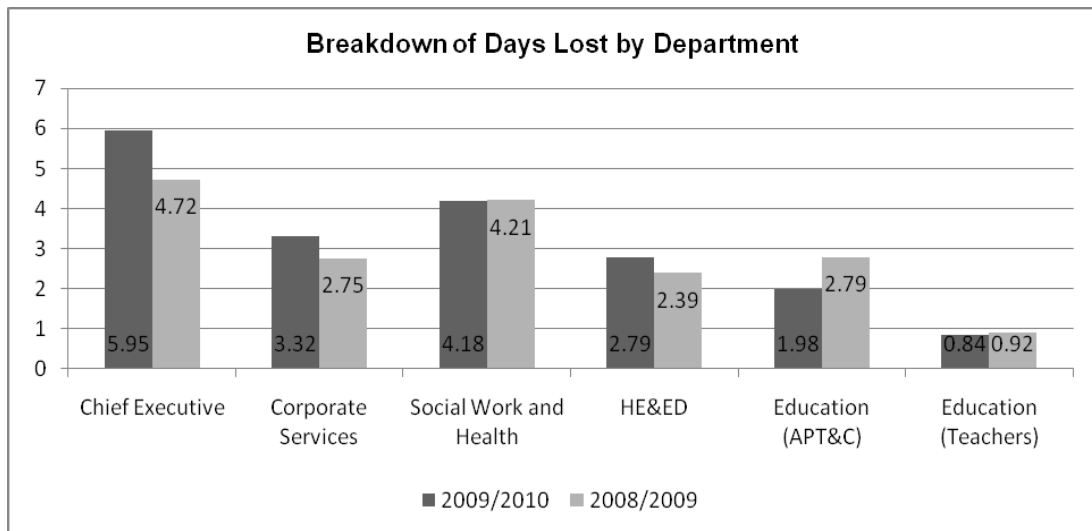
2.7 The total FTE days lost per FTE employee for Quarter 2 (July, August and September) 2009/2010, compared to the same quarter the previous year, is detailed below:



- 2.8 The figure of 2.71 FTE days lost per FTE employee is a slight increase on the figure reported for the same quarter the previous year (increase of 0.1 FTE days).

Days Lost - Departmental Breakdown & Quarterly Comparison

- 2.9 A departmental breakdown and comparison for Quarter 2 is detailed on the next page.



- 2.10 Overall there was an increase of 0.1 average FTE days lost per FTE employee. The variances in FTE days lost in each department are detailed below:

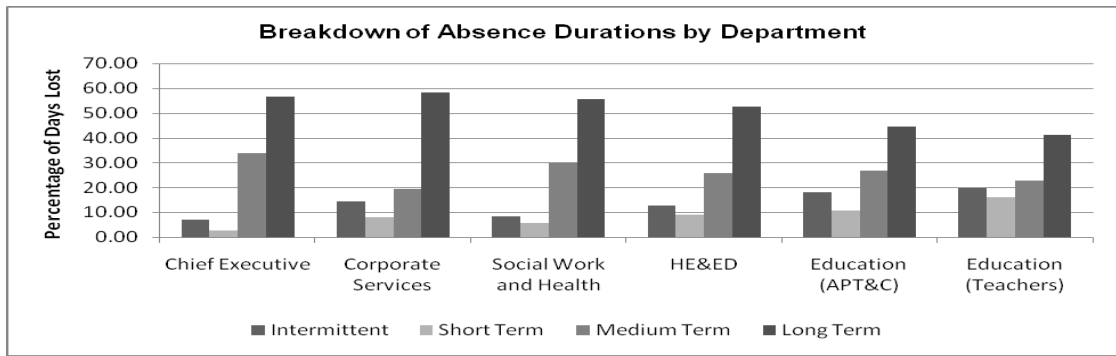
Variance Increase		Variance Decrease	
Chief Executive	1.23	Social Work and Health	0.03
Corporate Services	0.57	Education (APT&C)	0.81
Housing, Economic and Environmental Development	0.4	Education (Teachers)	0.08

Absence Durations

- 2.11 Sickness absence is categorised into duration categories. Detailed below is the percentage of days lost per duration category.

Category	Percentage of Days Lost
Long term sickness absence <i>(absences over 4 weeks in duration)</i>	53%
Medium term sickness absence <i>(absences between 6 days and 4 weeks)</i>	27%
Short Term sickness absence <i>(absences between 4 and 5 days)</i>	8%
Intermittent sickness absence <i>(absences between 1 to 3 days)</i>	12%

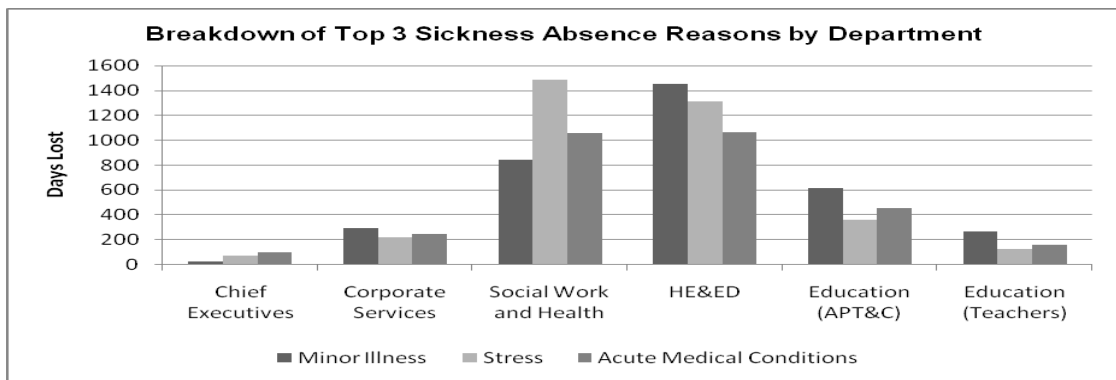
This is consistent with the breakdown of absence durations for Quarter 1 (2009/2010).



2.12 The above graph shows that long term sickness absence is a significant factor for absence within all Departments.

Absence Reasons

2.13 The top 3 reasons for absence for Quarter 2 (July, August and September) 2009/2010 have been broken down by department and detailed below.



2.14 The top 3 reasons for sickness absence within the Council are no longer following national trends. Musculoskeletal Conditions are normally in the top 3 reasons for absence, but this quarter it has been superseded by Acute Medical Conditions.

2.15 Across the Council stress is the top reason for sickness absence and represents nearly 21% of all days lost.

2.16 It is important to note that there were 22 days lost in the quarter due to Alcohol or Substance Misuse related conditions. This is a decrease on the 36 days lost in the previous quarter (Quarter 1 April - June, 2009/2010).

3. Personnel Issues

3.1 The effective management of absence is critical as those still at work often find themselves absorbing workloads for their absent colleagues. There are considerable HR issues in developing a new approach to managing attendance. There will be ongoing involvement of trades unions and managers in developing new policies, procedures and processes to ensure that absence management is dealt with much more robustly, and it is hoped to develop any new approaches on a partnership basis.

- 3.2** A new Maximising Attendance Policy is being developed and is due for implementation in April 2010.
- 3.3** A centralised approach to developing policies, procedures and processes will enable the consistent management of sickness absence issues. An absence pilot will commence December 2009 within Corporate Services and Chief Executives. The pilot aims to achieve the following:
- Reducing manager's administration time
 - Reducing the number of days lost/instances of absence in comparison to the same period for 2008/09
 - Increasing the number of Return to Work interviews and Attendance Review Meetings held and also earlier and increased referrals to Occupational Health to address employee health issues
 - Standardising absence management and special leave allocation behaviours to ensure consistency across all managers
 - Reviewing and refining the performance of the new absence module

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1** Absence has a significant impact upon the cost of service delivery, particularly where overtime and/or replacement costs are incurred to deliver essential services.

5. Risk Analysis

- 5.1** If there is no significant improvement in the absence rates there is a significant risk that the Council will continue to be one of the poorest performing Councils in relation to absence.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

- 6.1** There is considerable work to be undertaken in the consistent collection of data and enabling a more robust analysis of interventions. A central focus on driving this forward continues to be required.
- 6.2** The Corporate and Efficient Governance Committee is asked to note the contents of this report and to request further information if required.

Joyce White
Director of Corporate Services

Person to Contact: Tricia O'Neill, Head of Human Resources
& Organisational Development
Tel 01389 737584
Email: tricia.o'neill@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Appendices: None

Background Papers: None