

EXECUTIVE – 18 MAY 2004

Minute Item No 21

21 Sickness Absence Monitoring Report (Agenda item number 25)

Details were given of the amount of working time lost as a result of sickness absence in the Council, together with comparison with other public sector organisations.

Decision

- 1) To note the report by the Director of Corporate Services.
- 2) To note that the Council had an objective of reducing sickness levels by ten per cent by March 2005.
- 3) To note that monitoring that objective was part of the Council's six monthly management information reporting process.
- 4) To ask the Director of Corporate Services to include in future monitoring reports:
 - Details of each department's sickness absence targets with an explanation of why targets had not been met (if that were the case) and measures being undertaken to attain those targets. If targets had been met, details to be provided of how these would be maintained.
 - Details of each department's previous levels of sickness absence for comparison purposes.

(Reference – report no. E/614/03-04/CS by the Director of Corporate Services, submitted)

Note: The above item was called in to the Resource Management and Audit Scrutiny Panel of 17 June 2004.

Sickness Absence Monitoring Report

Executive of the Council

18th May 2004

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 This report quantifies the amount of working time lost as a result of sickness absence in the Council, and compares the levels of sickness absence with other public sector organisations. An analysis of the amount of time lost to short and long term absence at a departmental level is also provided.

2 Main report

- 2.1 The Accounts Commission Performance Indicators 2002/03 report pointed out that there had been no improvement in sickness absence levels across the Council as a whole over the past four years. When these statistics were reported in October 2003, the Executive requested a more detailed report into sickness absence.
- 2.2 A recent publication by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development reported that the average sickness absence level across the public sector in the United Kingdom is 4.6%, and that the level in local government (including police and fire) is 5.0%. The Council reported sickness levels of 5.4% over all groups of staff in 2002/03, which is identical to the average of all Scottish councils.
- 2.3 The Accounts Commission requires councils to report sickness absence for three employee groups: administrative, professional, technical & clerical employees and chief officers (APTC & CO); craft & manual employees; and teachers.

All Staff

- 2.4 The Council's sickness absence level over all staff groups has risen from 5.2% in 1999/00 to 5.4% in 2002/03, while the average across Scotland has remained static at 5.4%. The best performing council in 2002/03 reported a sickness absence level of 3.9%. Table A of Appendix 1 shows this data in a table and as a graph.

APTC & CO Staff

- 2.5 Sickness absence amongst the Council's APTC & CO staff has risen every year for the past four years and is 5.4%. This slightly exceeds the Scottish average of 5.3%. Scotland's top performing council reported a figure of 3.2% in the last year for which data are available. Table B in Appendix 1 shows this information in greater detail.

Craft & Manual Staff

- 2.6 Sickness among craft & manual employees has risen over the last three years and is the area where the Council compares least favourably with other Scottish Councils. The Council reported a sickness absence of level of 7.4%, compared to a Scottish average of 6.4%, and a top council value of 5.1%. Table C in Appendix 1 shows the values reported over the four years for which data are available.

Teaching Staff

- 2.7 Sickness levels among teaching staff show a continuous reduction over the past four years and levels have remained well below the national average throughout that period. At 2.6%, the Council recorded the best value of any Scottish council in the 2002/03 reporting year, well below that Scottish average of 3.9%. More detailed information is available in Appendix 1, Table D.

Departmental analysis

- 2.8 Appendix 2 shows the levels of days lost to sickness for all departments. The data assumes that the reporting procedures have been followed for all cases of sickness absence. If this assumption is incorrect, the data presented could understate the actual level of absence.
- 2.9 The data are separated into the different classifications of employee. Where possible, the episodes of sickness absence are separated into long and short term absence. This is the first time data have been reported in this way, and it is not yet possible to provide detailed information on sickness for all services.
- 2.10 The data show the total levels of sickness varying from 1.43% among non teaching staff in Education, to 14.42% and 15.10% among craft and manual employees in Social Work and Corporate Services respectively. The lowest levels of sickness among craft and manual employees is in City Development (3.11%), and the highest level among APTC & CO staff is in Finance (5.87%). Where data are available for long and short term absence, they almost invariably show that more time is lost through short term sickness, that is episodes of illness lasting less than 40 days.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 The level of sickness absence recorded among all groups of staff is in line with other Scottish councils. Within different groups of staff, sickness is lower than

other councils for teachers, and higher for craft and manual employees. Over a four year period, fewer days have been lost to sickness among teachers. However, over the same period more days have been lost to sickness among both craft and manual and APTC & CO staff. The Council is still developing effective systems for identifying the nature of episodes of sickness. It would appear from the data available that more days are lost due to short term sickness, that is episodes that last less than 40 days.

4 Recommendations

4.1 It is recommended that the Executive notes:

- a) the contents of this report;
- b) that the Council has an objective of reducing sickness levels by ten percent by March 2005; and
- c) that monitoring this objective is part of the Council's six monthly management information reporting process.

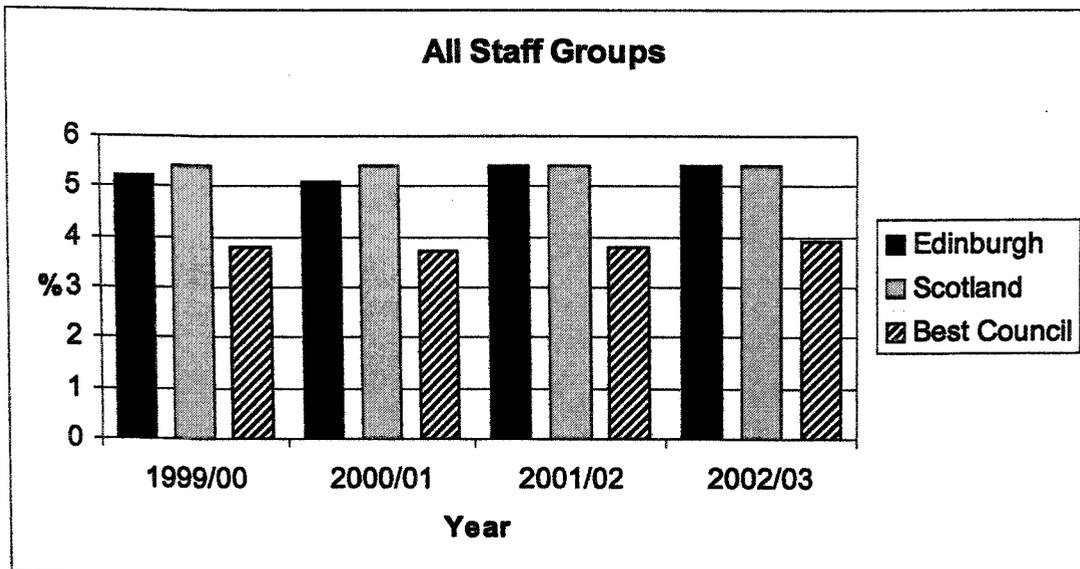

Jim Inch
Director Corporate Services

29/04/04

Appendices	Appendix 1: Percentage of working days lost to sickness absence Appendix 2: Sickness Absence: April to September 2003
Contact/tel/Email	Steven Di Ponio 469 3839 steven.diponio@edinburgh.gov.uk
Wards affected	N/A
Background Papers	Comparative Analysis of Council Performance, 13 January 2004 Employee Absence 2003, CIPD, 2003 Performance Indicators 2002/03: Corporate Management, Audit Scotland, 2004

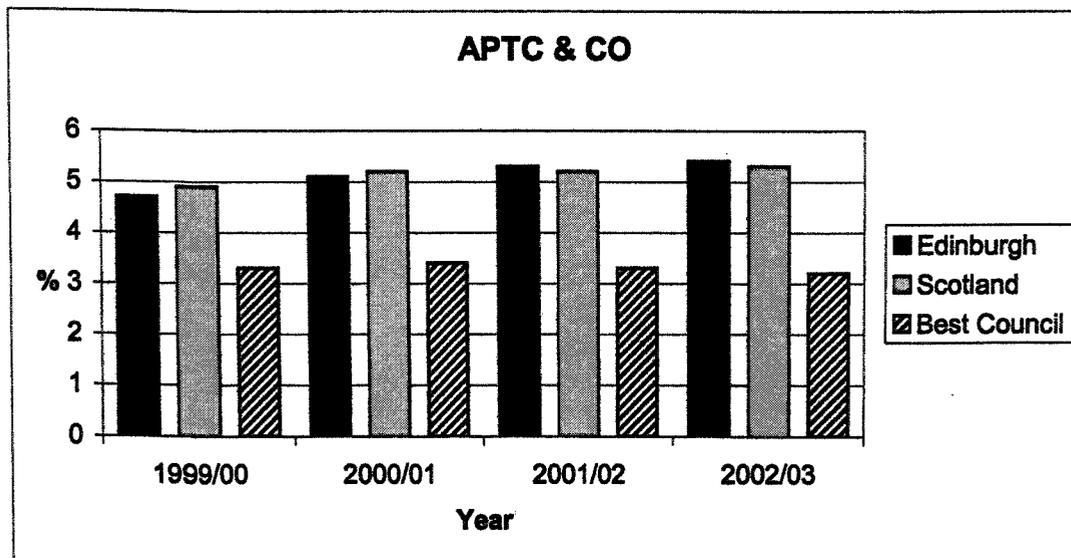
Percentage of working days lost to sickness absence

Table A: Sickness in all staff groups



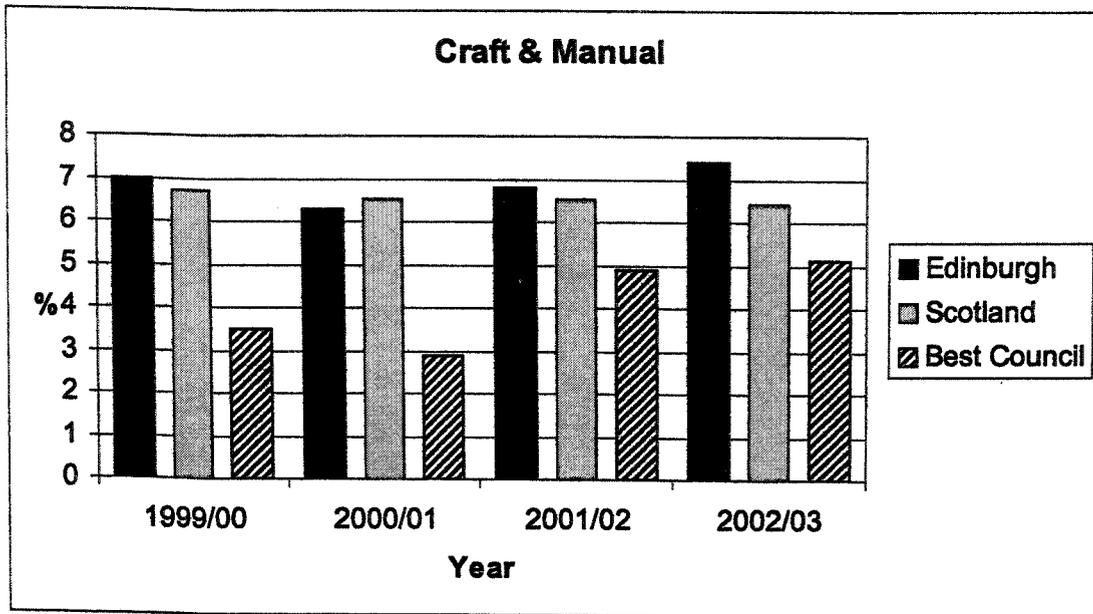
All staff	Year			
	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03
Edinburgh	5.2	5.1	5.4	5.4
Scotland	5.4	5.4	5.4	5.4
Best Council	3.8	3.7	3.8	3.9

Table B: Sickness in administrative, professional, technical, clerical staff and chief officers



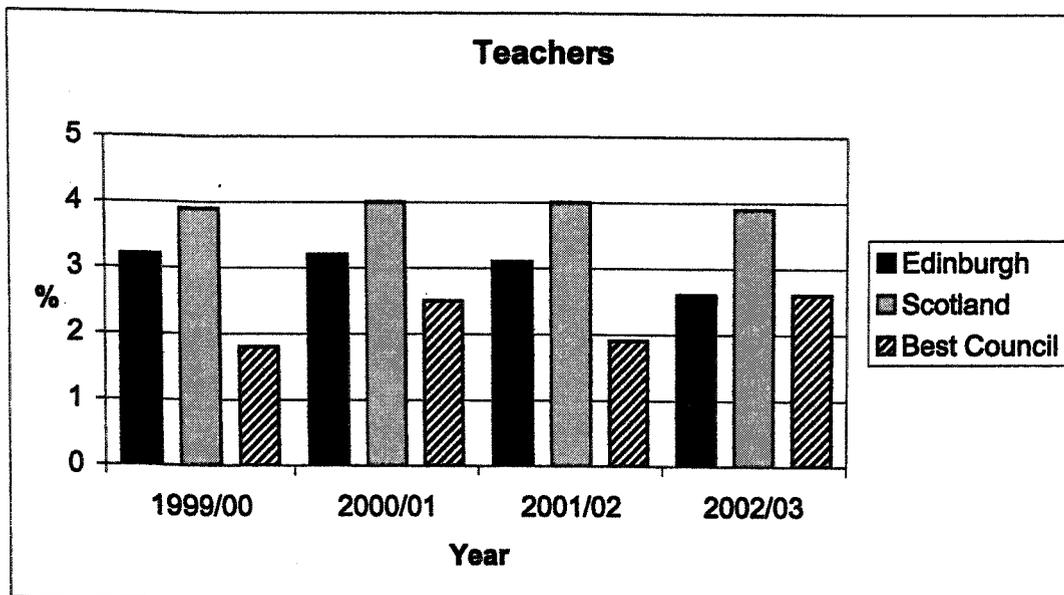
Group (APTC & CO)	Year			
	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03
Edinburgh	4.7	5.1	5.3	5.4
Scotland	4.9	5.2	5.2	5.3
Best Council	3.3	3.4	3.3	3.2

Table C: Sickness in craft and manual staff



Group (Craft & manual)	Year			
	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03
Edinburgh	7.0	6.3	6.8	7.4
Scotland	6.7	6.5	6.5	6.4
Best Council	3.5	2.9	4.9	5.1

Table D: Sickness in teaching staff



Group (Teachers)	Year			
	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03
Edinburgh	3.2	3.2	3.1	2.6
Scotland	3.9	4	4	3.9
Best Council	1.8	2.5	1.9	2.6

Sickness Absence: April to September 2003

Department	Employee Classification	Long Term Sickness	Short Term Sickness	Total Sickness
City Development	APTC & CO	1.24	2.80	4.04
	Craft & Manual	0.95	2.16	3.11
Corporate Services	APTC & CO	1.00	2.10	3.10
	Craft & Manual	9.14	5.96	15.10
Catering Services	APTC & CO	N/a	N/a	0.90
	Craft & Manual	N/a	N/a	4.24
Direct Cleaning	APTC & CO	N/a	N/a	3.41
	Craft & Manual	N/a	N/a	4.96
Education	APTC & CO	N/a	N/a	1.43
	Teaching	N/a	N/a	2.00
Social Work	APTC & CO	N/a	N/a	7.06
	Craft & Manual	N/a	N/a	14.42
Culture and Leisure Services	APTC & CO	1.21	3.64	4.85
	Craft & Manual	1.21	2.08	3.29
Environmental & Consumer Servs	APTC & CO	3.40	1.50	4.90
	Craft & Manual	2.80	4.30	7.10
Finance	APTC & CO	1.99	3.88	5.87
	Craft & Manual	0	2.91	2.91 ¹
Housing (Excluding EBS)	APTC & CO	1.89	2.62	4.51
	Craft & Manual	5.35	2.62	7.97
Edinburgh Building Services	APTC & CO	0.95	3.26	4.21
	Craft & Manual	3.34	4.27	7.61

Notes

All figures shown are percentages of working days lost to sickness.

April to September 2003 is the latest period for which data are available.

This is the first time that it has been possible to identify long and short term sickness. Further work is still required to make this reporting operational over all services.

Long term sickness is defined as episodes of sickness lasting 40 days or more.

N/a – no data is available.

¹ Relates to a total of three day's absence.

Briefing Note: Sickness Absence Monitoring Report

The key points are:

- The report was requested by the Executive, following data on sickness absence being made available as part of the statutory performance indicator reporting;
- more days are lost to sickness in councils than in almost any other area of employment;
- sickness levels in the Council are comparable with other Scottish councils when all groups of staff are considered;
- sickness levels are lower for teachers in Edinburgh than in other councils, but higher rates are reported for craft and manual workers;
- no improvements are evident in the number of days lost to sickness over the four year period for which data have been reported;
- the Council has made a commitment to reduce the number of days lost to sickness by 10% in the 2004/05 reporting year;
- most of the days lost to sickness result from episodes of absence that last for fewer than forty days;
- the six monthly Management Information Report (MIR) will be extended to monitor long and short absence for all groups of staff. Sickness absence is one the 25 key statutory performance indicators in which the Council aims to excel;
- no breakdown by long and short term sickness is available for Social Work, as the sickness information for staff is not yet recorded on the corporate system.
- it is possible that the figures reported understate the actual of level of sickness. This is because sickness reporting procedures may not always be followed upon returning to work after a short absence.
- With regard to the high sickness rates for Corporate Services, craft and manual workers, these relate to staff employed in the Corporate Transport Unit and Fleet Services. I understand that a relatively small number of staff on long term sick are distorting the figures.

The process of compiling this report has been particularly time consuming and if this information and level of analysis is to repeated on a more regular and frequent basis significant improvements in the provision of reliable and timeous data will be necessary.

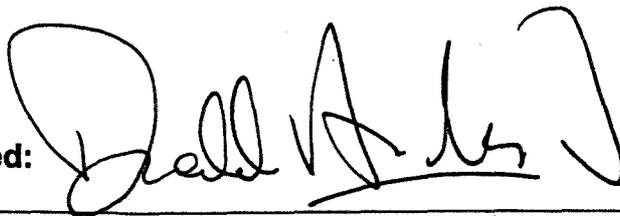
Agenda item:

Report title: Sickness Absence Monitoring Report

In accordance with the Council's Standing Orders, the contents of this report have been noted by the appropriate Executive Member.

Without prejudice to the integrity of the report, and the recommendations contained within it, the Executive Member expresses his/her own views as follows:

Signed:



Date:

10/5/4

For information – Standing Order 57(1) states:

“Heads of Department will prepare reports, with professional advice and recommendations, on matters requiring decisions by the Executive:

- a report seeking decisions on matters of corporate strategy, corporate policy and corporate projects will be submitted direct to the Executive
- a report seeking decisions on matters relating to the special responsibilities allocated to an individual member of the Executive will be submitted, in the first instance, to that member. The member will add his or her own recommendation to it before submission to the Executive. Where the Executive member disagrees with the advice and the recommendation of the officers, the Executive member will also state his or her reasons.”