

MANAGING ATTENDANCE 2011/12

1. Summary

1.1 The following report provides details of the Council' sickness absence levels for the financial year 2011/2012.

1.2 Note that, where average figures are used in the course of this report, allowances should be made for rounding of decimal points.

1.3 Human Resources have continued to work with both the Strategic Management Team and the Trades Unions to improve absence recording mechanisms and introduce new initiatives. In April 2012 the new Maximising Attendance Policy (Copy Attached) which was developed in consultation with the Trades Unions was agreed by the Executive and is now being rolled out.

- The new Maximising Attendance at work policy ensures that managers are prompted to review the cases of those who reach the triggers so that suitable action can be taken. This could include occupational health referrals, phased return to work, redeployment and where appropriate dismissal and/or disciplinary action.
- The main change in the policy is in relation to the triggers for short term absence which are now three instances of absence in a rolling period of 12 months.

1.4 Whilst it is pleasing to see the average number of days sickness per employee has fallen from 9.53 to 8.77 days per year, further improvements are still possible and each individual has a part to play in this. Managers will carry out Return to Work Interviews:

- Returns to work interviews are held for all staff who have been off however long or short their absence period. Robust monitoring arrangements are now in place to ensure return to work interviews are carried out on the employee's return to work after every single instance of sickness. Meetings of this type are widely regarded as the single most effective action that can be taken to reduce sickness absence.
- Each Head of Service has agreed a specific target for their service. Monthly absence reports are submitted to DMT and HR continue to provide coaching and mentoring as well as obtaining support and advice from the Council's Occupational Health advisers to ensure that each individual is managed in accordance with advice provided by the occupational health physician.

1.5 Significant improvements have been made in the recording of absence with the roll out of the Direct Reporting of Absence Line. Information is recorded in real time into Resourcelink, the Council's integrated HR and Payroll System, which allows HR to provide managers with up to date information.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended the Audit Committee:

- Note the statistics for the full financial year 2011-12
- Note the contents of the new Maximising Attendance Policy (Appendix One)

3.0 Detail

3.1 Current Absence Statistics

The current absence for the full year 2011/12 is shown in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1 – Average Number of Days Lost Per Employee by Service

Section	Service	Overall	2011/12 Target
Community	Adult Care	13.91	11.0
	Children & Families	12.25	9.0
	Education -Primary	6.26	5.8
	Education -Secondary	9.02	8.5
	Community and Culture	7.59	9.0
Customer	Facility	8.89	9.5
	Governance & Law	6.76	5.5
	Customer & Support	6.92	7.0
Dev & Infra	Roads & Amenity	8.30	9.9
	Economic Development	7.28	7.9
	Planning & Regulatory	7.54	9.9
Chief Exec	Improvement & HR	6.21	6.5
	Strategic Finance	4.20	5.5
Total		9.11	
Teachers			
Community	Education -Primary	6.59	6.25
	Education -Secondary	8.49	6.5
Total		7.62	

3.2 Table 2 lists the working days lost per year against the average FTE headcount per Service. Note that the FTE value is averaged for each quarterly report, the table shows the total of the four quarters divided by four.

Table 2 - Working Days lost and number Employees per Service

Section	Service	Working Days Lost	FTE
Community	Adult Care	7558	543
	Children & Families	2247	183
	Education -Primary	1875	299
	Education -Secondary	1849	205
	Community and Culture	1502	198
Customer	Facility	2771	312
	Governance & Law	378	56
	Customer & Support	1481	214
Dev & Infra	Roads & Amenity	4630	558
	Economic Development	627	86
	Planning & Regulatory	1031	137
Chief Exec	Improvement & HR	554	89
	Strategic Finance	227	54
Sub Total		26731	2934
Teachers			
Community	Education -Primary	2616	397
	Education -Secondary	4006	472
Sub Total		6622	869
Overall Total		33 353	3803

4.0 Proposed Targets for 2012/13

4.1 The Direct Absence Reporting (DAR) process has increased the accuracy of absence reporting. Data gathered via DAR was utilised for the final quarter of the 2011/12 attendance figures.

4.2 From analysis of the increased absence reported in the last quarter figures versus the last quarter of the previous year there is a 4.7% increase in absence. Comparing the third quarter results between 2011/12 and 2010/11 indicates a 6.4 % improvement in attendance figures. It is therefore estimated that the impact of the increased accuracy of reporting is 11.1%. This is reflected in the graphs at section 10 of this report.

4.3 Table 3 illustrates the likely impact of the DAR project on the 2011/12 results.

Table 3 – Figures factored up 11% for first 3 quarters

Service	Overall quarter 1 to 3 factored up 11%	2011/12 Target
Adult Care	15.07	11.0
Children & Families	13.22	9.0
Education -Primary	6.70	5.8
Education -Secondary	9.62	8.5
Community and Culture	8.19	9.0
Facility	9.60	9.5
Governance & Law	7.31	5.5
Customer & Support	7.41	7.0
Roads & Amenity	8.95	9.9
Economic Development	7.66	7.9
Planning & Regulatory	8.19	9.9
Improvement & HR	6.63	6.5
Strategic Finance	4.51	5.5

Education -Primary	7.07	6.25
Education -Secondary	9.07	6.5

4.4 The impact of factoring up the absence recorded for the first three quarters is to increase non education figures from 9.11 to 9.82 and teachers from 7.62 to 8.16, giving an overall Council figure of 9.44.

4.5 It is noted that last year's targets become exceedingly difficult if the 11% increase is factored in for the first 3 quarters, with only 5 Services meeting their targets.

4.6 Rather than tightening last year's target based on the recorded figures for last year it is recommended that cognisance is given to the impact accuracy of reporting and therefore targets are relaxed to recognise this.

4.7 Table 4 illustrates a proposed target structure for 2012/13. A simple approach to targets has been taken:

- For areas that have not met their previous target by over 30% and are above the Council Average Figure of 9.82 for non-teaching and 8.16 for teaching it is proposed a 15% improvement over the factored up figures.
- For areas that have below 7, i.e. a very low figure no improvement target is set as they are exceeding realistic targets. This is only the case in two small departments where one case of serious illness would lead to failure.
- A 5% improvement target to all other sections has been proposed. This was discussed with the Chief Executive and some Heads of Service and a number of targets revised.

4.8 If these targets are met it will lead to an improvement over the current under reported figures: Non-Teaching going from 9.11 to 9.0 and 7.62 to 7.5 for teaching

Table 4 – Figures factored up with proposed new Targets 2012/13

Section	Service	Overall corrected 2011/12	Proposed % improvement	Proposed Target 2012/13
Community	Adult Care	15.07	15	12.8
	Children & Families	13.22	10	11.9
	Education -Primary	6.70	5	6.4
	Education -Secondary	9.62	5	9.0
	Community and Culture	8.19	5	7.8
Customer	Facility	9.60	6	9.0
	Governance & Law	7.31	5	6.9
	Customer & Support	7.41	5	7.0
Dev & Infra	Roads & Amenity	8.95	5	8.5
	Economic Development	7.66	5	7.3
	Planning & Regulatory	8.19	5	7.8
Chief Exec	Improvement & HR	6.63	2	6.5
	Strategic Finance	4.51	0	5.5
Total		9.82		9.0
Teachers				
Community	Education -Primary	7.07	5	6.7
	Education -Secondary	9.07	10	8.2
Total		8.16		7.5
			Council Overall	8.7

4.9 The Strategic Management Team have agreed that it will be more beneficial to move from an overall Council target to individual Service targets to recognise differences in jobs such as variations in physical and mental demands, health and safety requirements etc. Service targets also encourage greater ownership and therefore greater chances of achieving their target in conjunction with the proactive measures outlined earlier in this report.

4.10 Targets have been calculated with reference to the average number of days lost per employee to improve on the outturn for 2011/12 which was set following analysis of the top 8 performing Scottish Councils in 2010/11 as opposed to national statistics. The intention is to improve attendance so that Argyll and Bute Council will be placed in the upper quartile of the best performing local authorities within the next three to five years. Audit Scotland do not specify targets for Councils.

5.0 Cost

5.1 It would be helpful to record the cost to the Council of sickness absence. HR is currently working with other Scottish Local Authorities to agree a common definition of “cost” and future reports will include an indication of the cost of sickness absence to the Council.

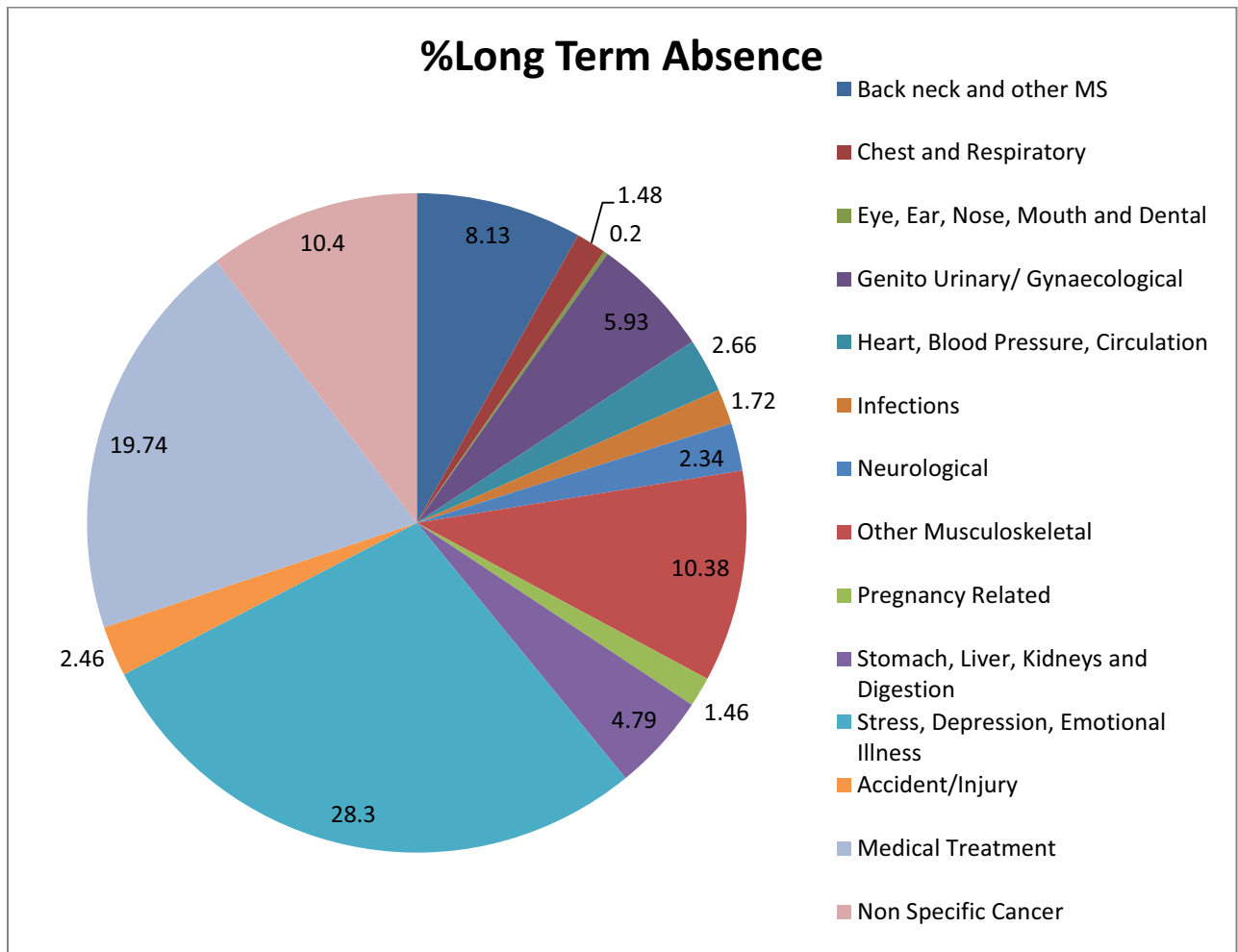
6.0 ABSENCE ANALYSIS

6.1 The CIPD annual absence survey 2011 puts the average long term absence across organisations at one third of overall absence. For the financial year 2011/12 long term absence within Argyll and Bute Council accounted for approximately 51.3 per cent of all absence, an increase from 32.2 per cent the previous year.

6.2 With this in mind representatives from HR have set up a regular meeting with Serco, the Council's Occupational Health providers, to review the cases of employees currently on long-term sickness. As a result the Council has a better understanding of the effect of each individual's medical condition on their work and HR Officers are working closely with line managers to ensure each case is managed in accordance with the medical advice received.

6.3 Graph 1 below shows the reasons for Long term absence across the Council in 2011/12.

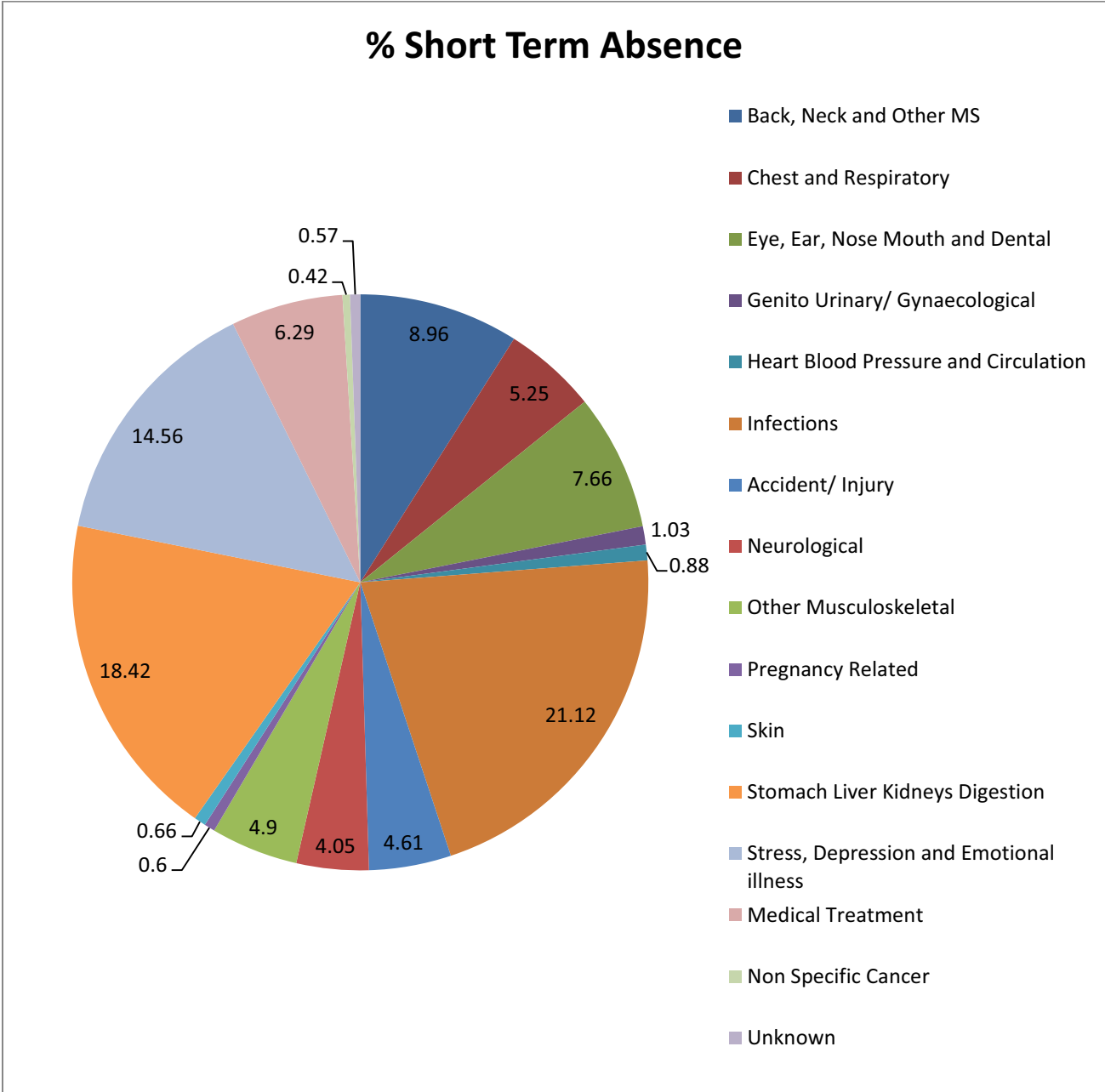
Graph 1: Absence Reasons (% of Long Term Absence)



6.4 In comparison to the previous year stress and emotional illnesses replace accidents and injuries as the most frequent reason for long term absences. A further analysis of stress related absence is outlined in section 6 of this report.

6.5 Short-term absence can have a detrimental effect on service delivery and be exacerbated by mismanagement. If an employee is repeatedly absent for short periods this is likely to both undermine the individual’s own performance and be disruptive to colleagues and the wider organisation. Short term absence accounted for approximately 48.7 per cent of all absence in 2011/12 which marked a decrease from 67.8% the previous year. The top 5 reasons for short term absence are shown in Graph 2.

Graph 2: Reasons for Short term absence (% of short term absence)



6.6 Compared to the previous years' figures the reasons for the three most frequent causes of short term absence (Infections, Stomach and Digestion problems and Stress and Emotional Illness) have remained the same.

6.7 The new maximising attendance policy has more robust trigger points for managing short term absence. The policy was implemented in July 2012 and managers are now using the policy to actively manage cases where employees meet a trigger point in relation to short term absence.

7.0 Analysis of Stress Related absence

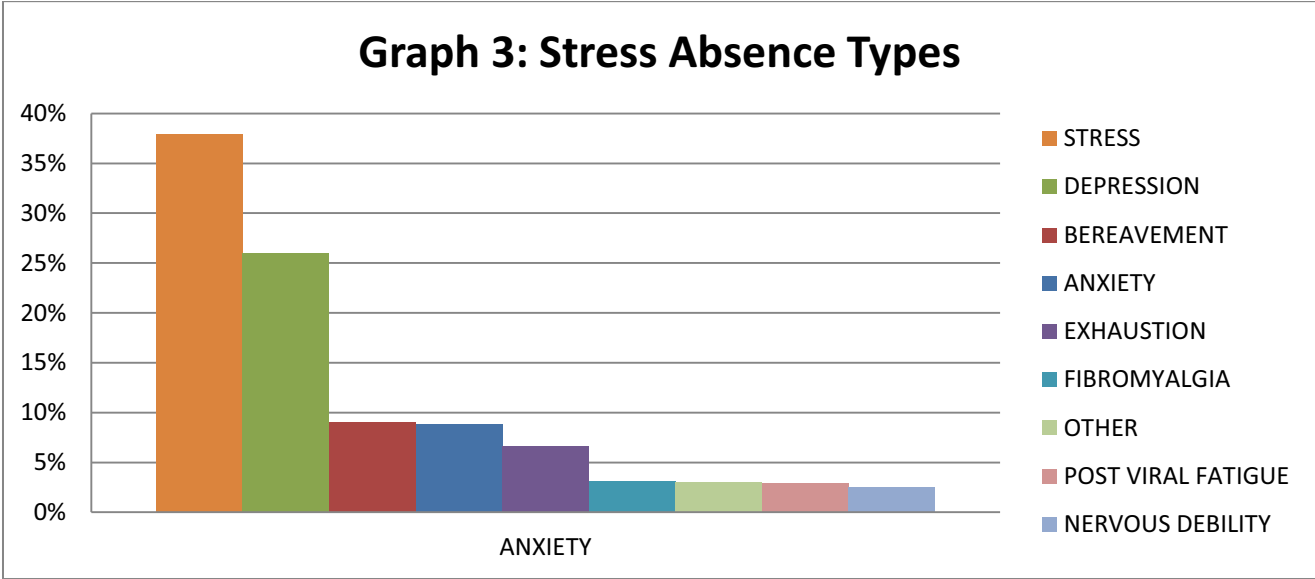
7.1 Stress and emotional illnesses have increased over the last year and have now become the most frequent reason for all sickness absence across the Council. Stress is responsible for 21% per cent of all sickness absence. This follows a trend identified in the 2011 CIPD annual absence survey:

7.2 “ Nearly two-fifths of employers overall (50% in the public sector) report that stress-related absence has increased over the past year.”

7.3 The top causes of stress at work are workloads, management style, non-work factors such as relationships and family, relationships at work and considerable organisational change/restructuring.

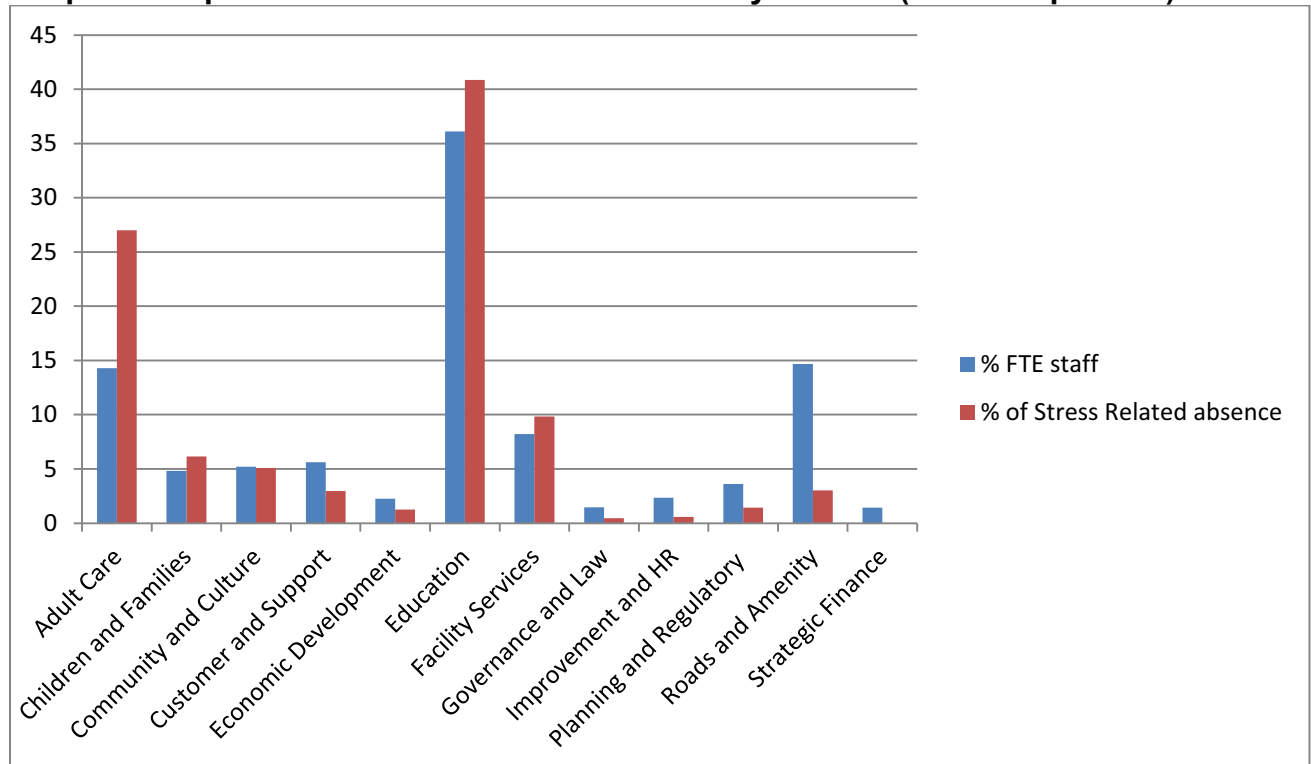
7.4 “Job insecurity is a more common cause of stress in the public sector this year compared with last year and is higher there than in the private or non-profit sectors.”

7.5 The current round of service reviews and resulting employment insecurity and change is likely to have been a factor in our figures. Graph 3 highlights a breakdown of the main types of absence within the category of stress related absence.



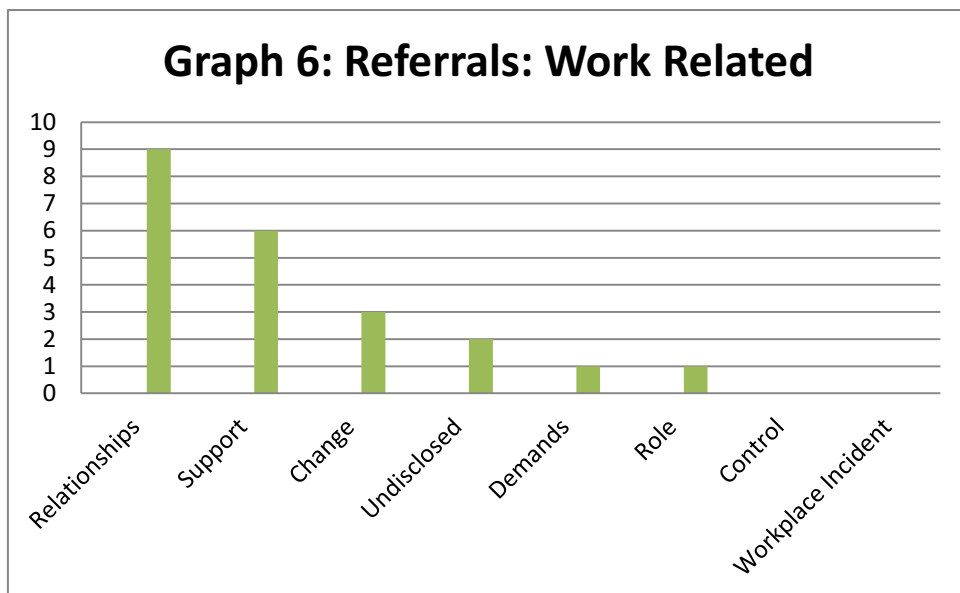
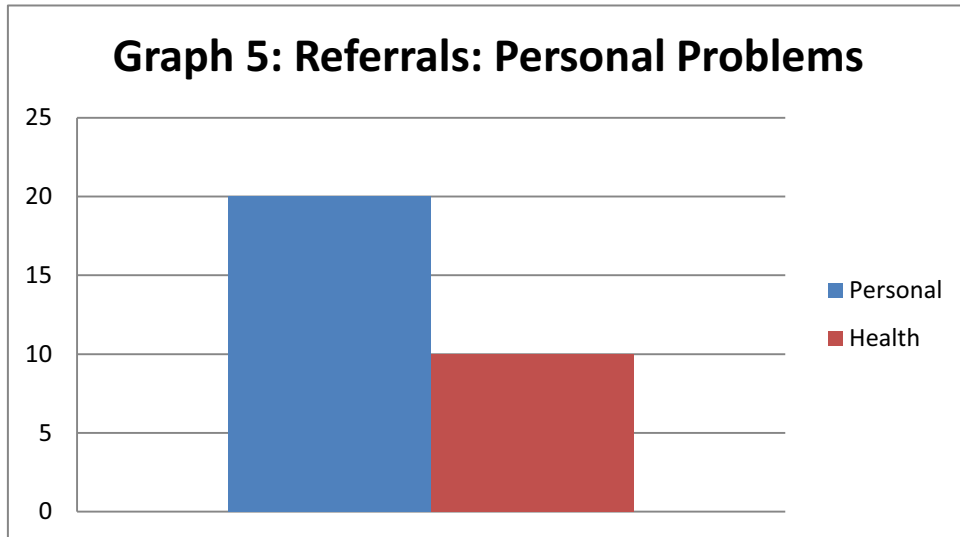
7.6 The graph below shows the proportion of stress related absence split by service against the FTE number staff for each service.

Graph 4: Proportion of Stress Related absence by Service (FTE Comparison)



7.7 One hundred and four employees attended counselling from 1st April 2010 to 31st March 2011. Of these, 58% cited personal reasons for seeking counselling whilst 42% gave work-related explanations. All but 2 were self-referrals. Graph 5 shows that of the non-work related referrals personal problems were the main reason cited for the referral. Graph 6 shows that “relationships” was the most commonly cited work-related reason given for obtaining counselling, closely followed by “support” and then “change”. These categories refer to the HSE’s Management Standards for work-related stress as outlined below:

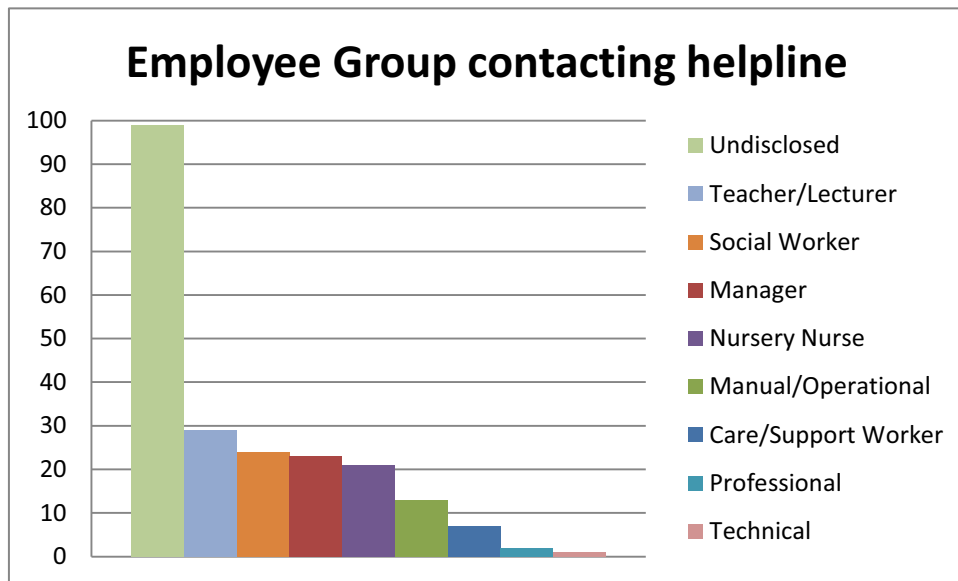
- Demands – workload, work patterns and work environment.
- Control – How much say a person has in their work.
- Support – Encouragement and resources provided by the Council, line management and colleagues.
- Role – Employees understand their role within their service.
- Change – How organisational change is managed and communicated within the Council.
- Relationships – promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.



7.8 There were a total of 78 return counselling appointments during the year.

7.9 In addition to structured counselling, the Employee Counselling Service operates an information helpline, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Graph 7 provides additional information with regard to employee type contact with the helpline from 1st April 2010 to 31st March 2011.

Graph 7: Employee Groups contacting information helpline



7.10 Human Resources continue to promote the activities of the Employee Counselling Service to ensure all employees are aware of the information and support available to them. Human Resources will continue to promote the activities of the Employee Counselling Service through posters, payslip messages, Cascade, The Hub, News Flash messages and correspondence with employees to ensure the message continues to reach those in even the largest, and most geographically dispersed departments.

8.0 Accidents and Reportable Incidents

8.1 The Council continues to have a good health and safety record and only a small proportion of incidents were sufficiently serious to be reported to the Health and Safety Executive. From 1st April 2010 to 31st March 2011 there were 16 reportable accidents under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations, 1995 placing the Council well below the national average for reportable events.

8.2 In 2000 the Council set itself targets to reduce the number of reportable accidents per year in line with the targets set out in the Health & Safety Executive's publication 'Revitalising Health & Safety'. Now used as a benchmark, the Council has always performed well in terms of these targets and through investment in Health and Safety, since 2007-08 has achieved year on year reductions in reportable accidents with a slight increase in the last year; though with a significant downward trend as follows:

Table 5 – Number of Reportable Accidents Per Year

Financial Year	Number of reportable accidents
2006-07	39
2007-08	37
2008-09	31
2009-10	23
2010-11	12
2011-12	16

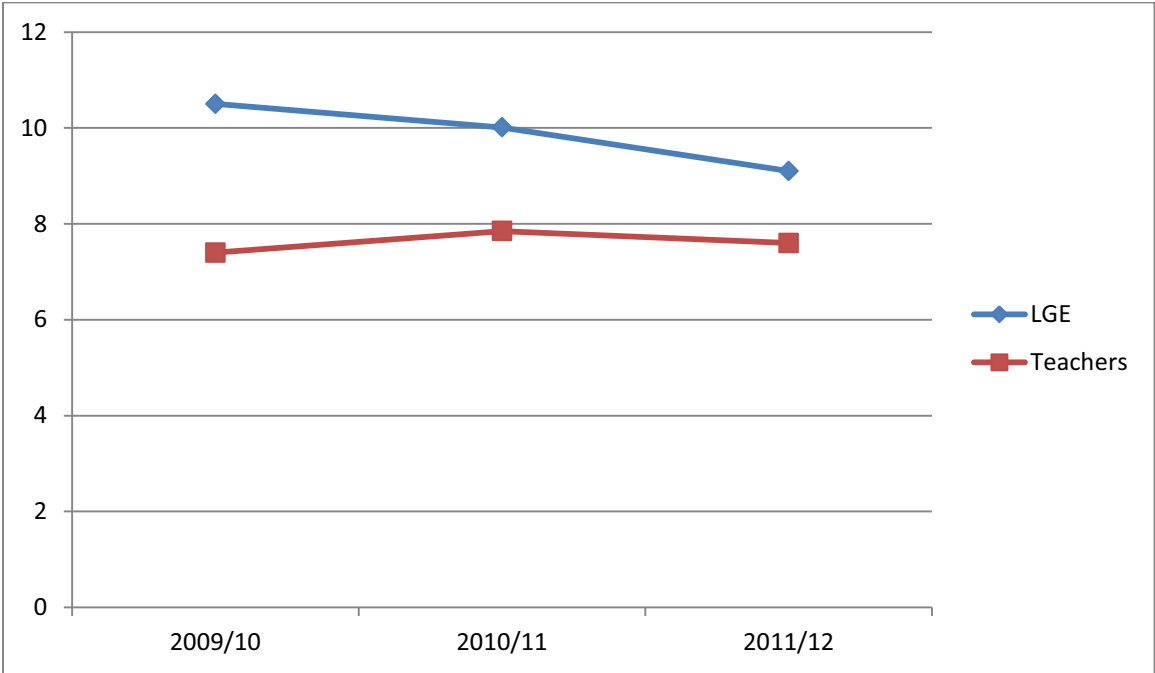
9.0 Review of Occupational Health Arrangements

9.1 A working group consisting of representatives from Human Resources and Health and Safety was formed to review occupational health arrangements and a number of meetings held in order to agree requirements. An initial tender was awarded to Serco however issues with the contract have meant that a further tended exercise will be undertaken.

10.0 Trend Analysis

10.1 The graph below charts the Statutory Performance Indicators, as reported to Audit Scotland for the previous three years.

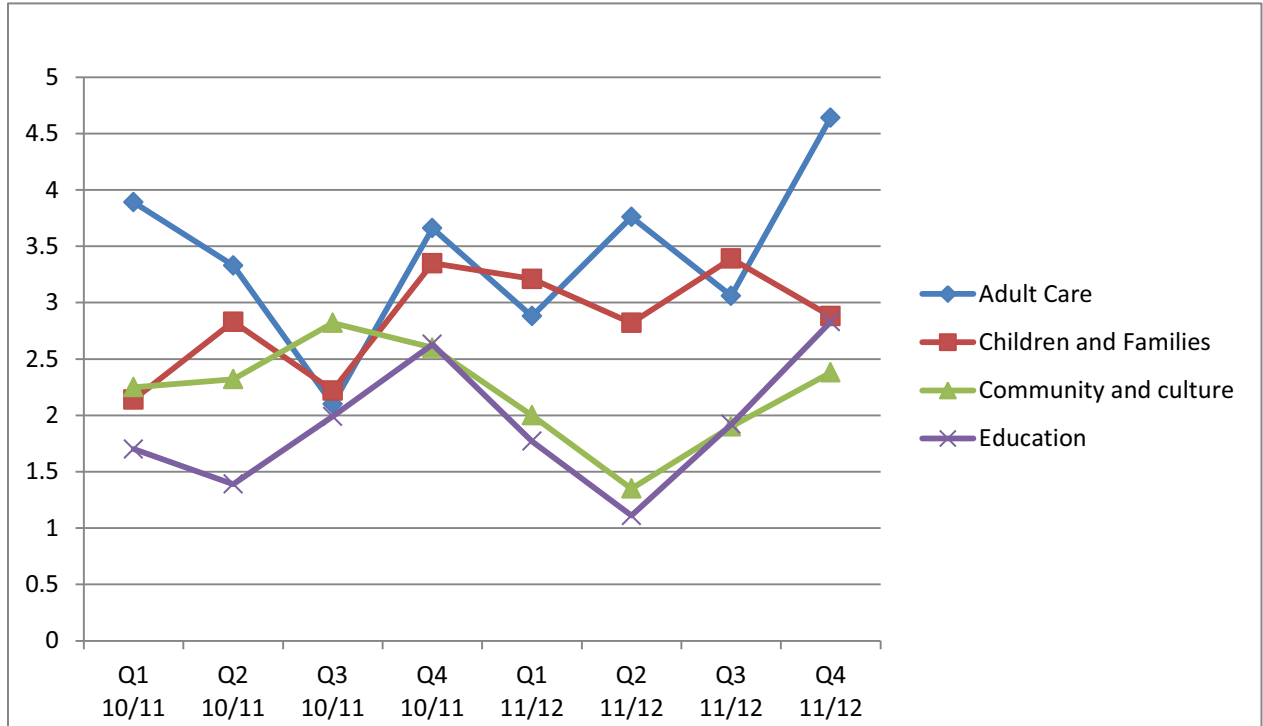
Graph8: Average Work Days lost per FTE employee (by employee group)



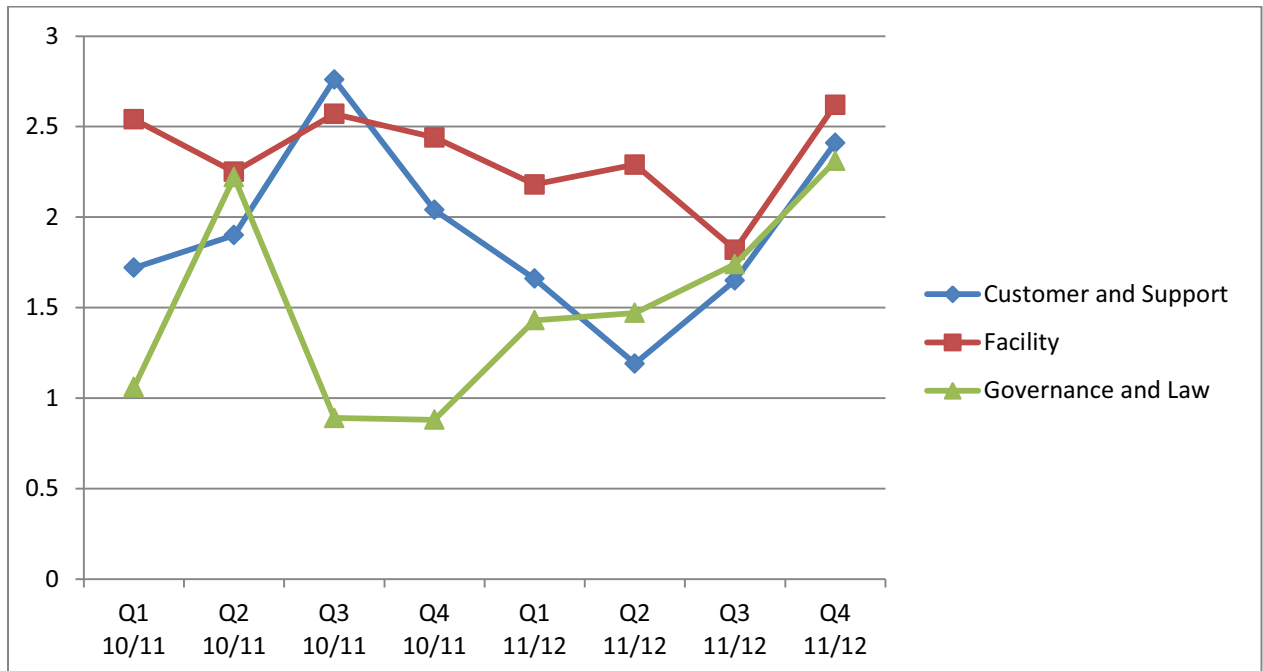
10.2 Departmental Trends

10.2.1 The graphs below outline by department the quarterly average days lost per FTE employee for each service. Ideally the Audit committee would like to see three years' data. However due to a restructure in 2010 where departments and services were realigned only figures from April 2010 will afford meaningful comparisons. Future reports will contain three years data.

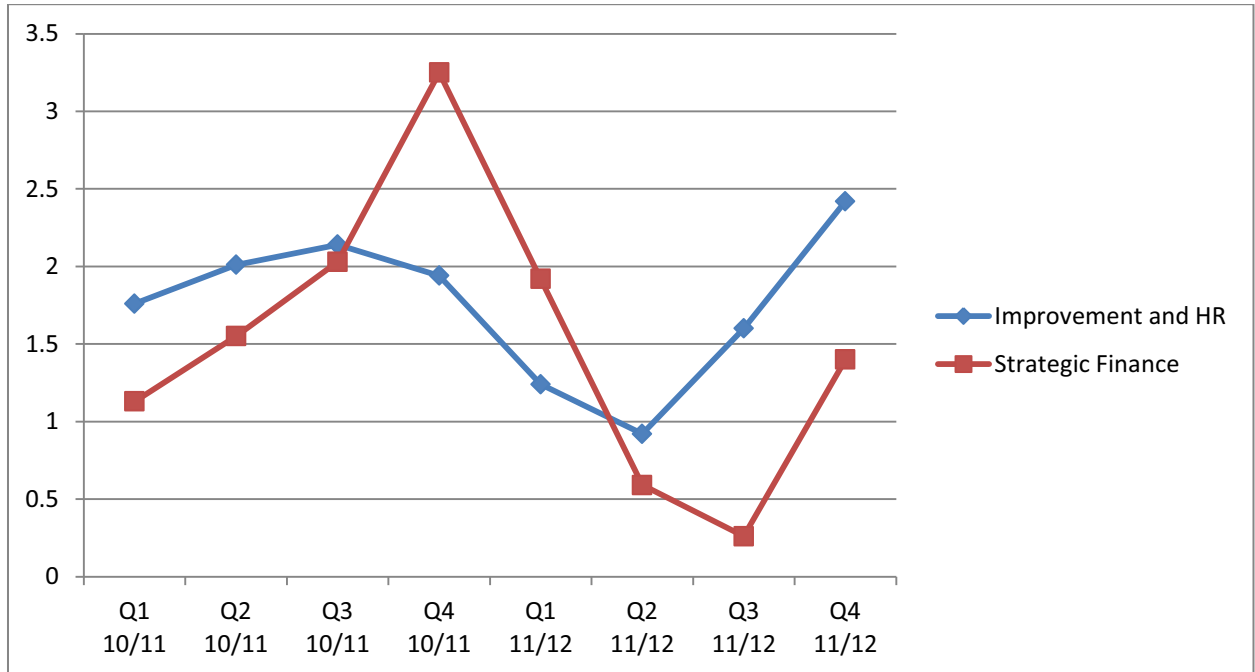
GRAPH 9: COMMUNITY SERVICES



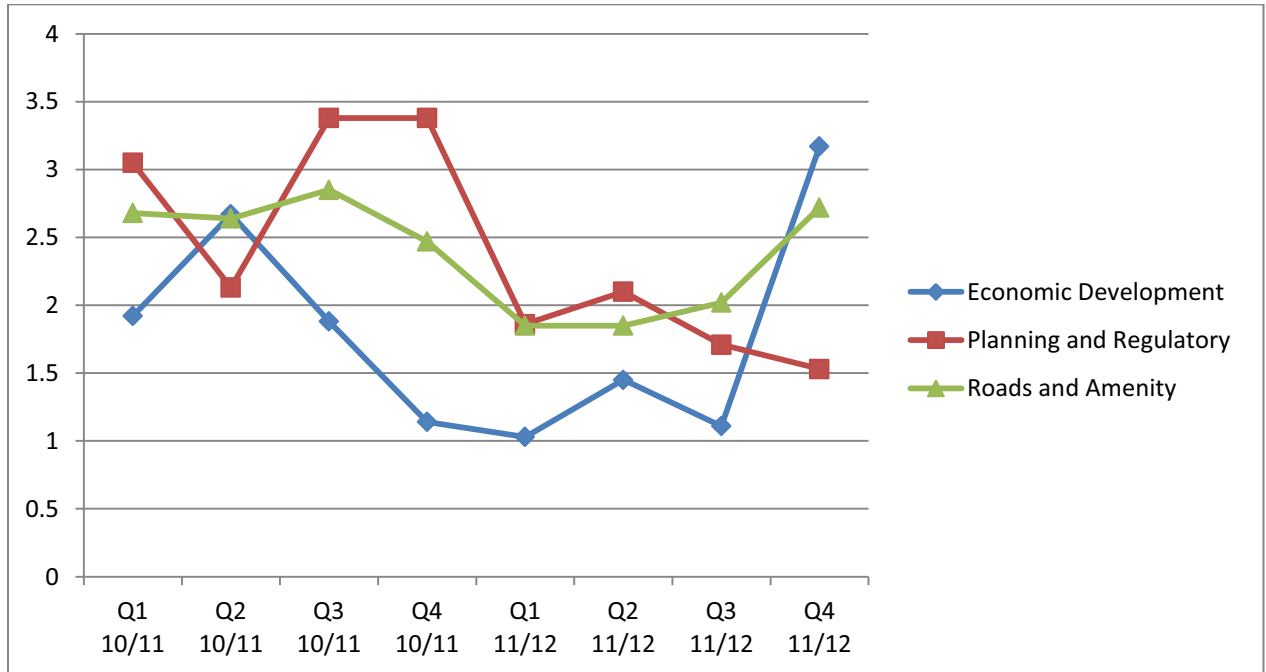
GRAPH 10: CUSTOMER SERVICES



GRAPH 11: CHIEF EXECUTIVES UNIT



GRAPH 12 DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE



11.0 Benchmarking with other authorities

11.1 Each of the 32 Scottish Local Authorities are required to publish their statutory performance indicators in relation to sickness absence. This allows for comparison to be made between the performance of Argyll and Bute Council and other Scottish Councils. The table below shows Argyll and Bute Council's ranking against the 31 other Scottish Local Authorities in relation to the Statutory Performance Indicators over three years.

TABLE6: Council Ranking on Statutory Performance Indicators

Employee Group	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Teachers	19	25	28
LGE	10	10	3

12.0 Conclusion

12.1 The Authority is taking an increasingly holistic and preventative approach to Attendance Management through the provision and use of cost effective support services such as Physiotherapy, the Employee Counselling Service and occupational health. These can help to keep employees at work or expedite the return of those who are absent.

12.2 Cumulatively, absence levels from 1st April 2011 to 31st March 2012 are lower than last year. The Council recognises that further improvements are still possible and is committed to monitoring and reviewing its management practices in light of organisational changes and developments in best practice. This will be an ongoing process and will ensure the Council continues to achieve the reductions in sickness absence costs that are now being generated.

12.3 Argyll and Bute Council has made some significant improvement in absence management over 2011/12. Some of this improvement is lost due to increased accuracy of absence reporting introduced over the last quarter of 2011/12.

12.4 Absence targets for 1012/13 should be set taking into consideration the impact of the underreporting of absence prior to the introduction of the new DAR process.

12.5 Attendance Targets are agreed by Executive Directors and Executive Directors ensure Heads of Service take ownership of their targets.

13.0 IMPLICATIONS

PERSONNEL Support Services will continue to be promoted to employees and reviewed by the Council to ensure they are providing value for money and continue to meet requirements. The new Maximising Attendance Policy and Procedures have been communicated to all staff. Promotional activities are in place to advise employees of changes to reporting procedures as the Direct Absence Reporting Phone line is rolled out across the Authority.

FINANCIAL	Failure to properly manage sickness absence can lead to an increase in costs through sick pay and the cost of cover for the absent employee. The Council has, and will continue to face, significant budgetary constraints and needs to ensure it is making the most effective and efficient use of resources.
EQUALITY	Internal and external support mechanisms such as Human Resources, Employee Counselling Service and Occupational Health (including occupational physiotherapy) are available to all staff within the Council.
LEGAL	Line managers need to be aware of the implications of the Equality Act 2010 when making any decisions that affect someone who may be disabled as defined by the Act. Failure to address incidences of work-related stress within the workplace may result in claims being raised against the Council.
RISK	Failure to maximise attendance could present operational, financial and reputational risk to the Council

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ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL

MAXIMISING ATTENDANCE AT WORK POLICY

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1. Scope

- 1.1. This Policy and associated procedures apply to all employees of Argyll and Bute Council.

2. Policy Statement

- 2.1. Levels of attendance at work directly affect the quality and provision of services through the ability of employees to carry out their work efficiently and effectively. Whilst some absence due to sickness is inevitable, the Council's objective is to ensure that sickness absence is minimised through effective management supported by fair and consistent procedures.
- 2.2. Absence due to sickness can be for a number of reasons. It is important that within a common policy approach, instances of sickness absence are dealt with on an individual basis. A balanced approach is required which takes into account the need to maintain high levels of attendance whilst ensuring employees are treated fairly, consistently and sympathetically.
- 2.3. It is intended that this Policy be used positively and constructively to support and enable employees to return or remain at work. At all stages, discussions will focus on exploring ways to improve and maintain attendance thereby ensuring service needs are met. The particular circumstances of each individual will be considered and relevant support measures implemented where these can contribute to improved attendance levels.
- 2.4. A healthy workforce and a healthy working environment are essential to achieving higher levels of attendance and providing high quality services. The Council is therefore committed to developing occupational health and related services, and to promoting health at work, as measures to improve attendance levels. In this regard there are a number of other Council policies which are complementary to the Council's wider approach to promoting health at work and these include the Equal Opportunities Policy, Health and Safety Policies as well as the Stress Reduction Policy. The Council recognises that, depending on the nature of the health condition and/or absence, early intervention can be effective in promoting improved health and attendance.
- 2.5. In the case of illness resulting from a disability, "reasonable adjustments" will be made wherever practicable to support and facilitate an employee's attendance at work in accordance with relevant disability discrimination legislation.
- 2.6. The effectiveness of this Policy will be monitored through regular reporting of relevant sickness absence management information to the Council's Strategic Management Team and Elected Members/Audit Committee.

3. Principles and Aims

3.1. The following principles apply to the Council's procedures for dealing with sickness absence:

- Good attendance is valued and all opportunities should be taken to acknowledge and recognise such attendance.
- The Council will aim to promote a positive and preventative, rather than punitive approach.
- Matters raised relating to an employee's attendance do not imply any distrust of the employee or concerns regarding their conduct.
- Sickness/injury absence will be dealt with in a way that is non-discriminatory and in accordance with the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy. A copy of the Equal Opportunities Policy can be found within the HUB under HR Section.
- Employees will be dealt with consistently, and the sickness absence procedures will be fairly applied across the Authority. The Council will be sensitive, and supportive to those suffering the effects of ill health.
- Sickness absence cases will be conducted with respect for confidentiality and in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection, and Access to Medical Reports Acts.
- Open communication between managers and employees will be encouraged and promoted.

The Maximising Attendance at Work Policy and associated procedures will be monitored and reviewed to ensure that they continue to meet the Council's aims and comply with these principles.

4. Roles and Responsibilities in Implementing the Policy

Responsibility for implementing and complying with this Policy lies with individuals at all levels within the Council.

The role of the Strategic Management Team is to:

- Analyse and monitor corporate/departmental sickness absence data and trends based on quarterly returns
- Determine, as necessary, the requirement for targeted interventions in areas with higher sickness absence or where patterns or trends emerge
- Report Council-wide sickness absence levels to the Council's Executive Committee on a quarterly and bi-annual basis per department via scorecards.

Heads of Service are required to:

- Monitor sickness absence by service area on an ongoing basis using absence data provided by Human Resources
- Ensure line managers are trained in applying the Maximising Attendance at Work Policy and procedures.
- Monitor action being taken by managers in respect of cases where triggers have been reached and follow up on progress

Line Managers are required to:

- Let employees know that their contribution to the work of the Council is valued, and that their attendance at work makes a significant contribution to providing a quality service.
- Manage absence among the employees for which they have responsibility. This includes:
 - Ensuring that employees are aware of the notification (and where appropriate, certification procedures) for absences of any kind.
 - Ensuring that accurate absence records are kept for each employee
 - Dealing immediately, fairly and sensitively with employees when they are ill and providing support to encourage attendance.
 - Maintaining regular contact with employees who are absent.

- Make reasonable adjustments (where appropriate) to aid employees return to work or where the employee has raised concerns that their work is impacting their health.
- Conduct Return to Work Meetings and, where appropriate, further meetings with employees in accordance with the Maximising Attendance at Work Policy and associated procedures.

Employees are required to:

- Attend work unless unfit to do so.
- Advise their line manager of any illness or condition which may affect their ability to attend work or to undertake the duties of their post.
- Take personal and contractual responsibility for attendance levels, their own well-being and seek medical advice and appropriate treatment promptly to maintain attendance, and/or facilitate an early return to work.
- Raise concerns with their manager (or Human Resources if appropriate) and where possible detail possible solutions if they believe their job is making them ill, or contributing to illness.
- Report sickness absences promptly, in accordance with the Maximising Attendance at Work procedures.
- Ensure appropriate certifications are completed and submitted in accordance with notification and certification procedures.
- Maintain regular contact with their manager during periods of sickness/injury absence.
- Communicate effectively with their manager about their sickness/injury absence.
- Co-operate as appropriate with the Council's Occupational Health Adviser and other organisations that provide support to the Council and its' employees.
- Not knowingly abuse the maximising attendance procedures or sick pay schemes.

The role of Human Resources is to:

- Provide advice and guidance to employees and line managers in managing attendance.
- Provide reports and statistical information to managers to enable them to make informed decisions when monitoring and reviewing sickness absence
- Maintain links with the Council's Occupational Health provider and other similar agencies to support the implementation of this Policy

- Monitor the overall application of the Policy and associated procedures

5. Tackling the Causes of Sickness Absence – Additional Support

- 5.1. The Council has developed a range of initiatives designed to support employees and prevent and reduce sickness absence levels including;
- 5.2. Occupational Health - provide advice and guidance on the impact of ill health on work and what steps the Council and/or the employee may make in order to secure an early return to work.
- 5.3. Counselling Service – to provide a confidential information, counselling and assistance service to employees in order to discuss concerns related to work or personal circumstances.
- 5.4. Health improvement policies – developing initiatives which contribute to the improved health and welfare of the workforce supported by the national Healthy Working Lives agenda.
- 5.5. Flexible and home working arrangements – Extending the scope of flexible and home working arrangements to help employees to better achieve a work/life balance.
- 5.6. Additional training for managers – training on the Maximising Attendance at Work Policy & Procedures will be offered to provide additional support to managers.
- 5.7. The development of management information systems which will enable managers to receive detailed reports on the causes of absence and identify any trends that may be evident as well as the concentration of absence at a particular location.

Please refer to the “**Sources of Support for Managing Attendance**” document for further information. Sources of Support for Managing attendance can be obtained within the HUB under HR Section/Managing Staff

This is a “live” document and will be regularly reviewed by Improvement and HR. We will therefore be pleased to receive any comments and/or suggestions in relation to the Policy as part of this review cycle. These should be sent to the Head of Improvement & HR, Kilmory, Lochgilphead, PA31 8RT or via email to Jane.Fowler@argyll-bute.gov.uk.