

Regular performance monitoring of BVPI12 is part of the performance management framework. This is one of a number of targets used to manage the performance of services and teams. Regular performance monitoring and reporting is used proactively to measure progress towards achieving targets and to compare our service with others. This enables services to take corrective action to ensure that performance stays on track. Sickness absence is monitored via EMT, departmental management teams and directorate Performance Boards.

Equality Implications

When managing employee sickness absence, the Council aims to fully comply with the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

Consultation

Staff and Managers are consulted on the formulation of policies and procedures aimed at managing employee sickness absence.

Vision 2008

High levels of employee attendance are critical to the Council achieving excellent status.

Background Papers

Report to Community, Organisational, Leisure & Culture Scrutiny & Performance Panel – 8 December 2005

Walsall Council Managing Sickness Absence Policy

Employers Organisation Report – “Sickness Absence In Local Government 2004/05” – published March 2006.

1. Sickness Absence Levels – Walsall Council

The sickness absence levels for Walsall Council are as follows:

Year	Average Number of Days
2003/04	11.7
2004/05	11.02
2005/06	9.39*

* The 2005/6 figure is an average for the 3 quarters figures available. The figures for each quarter are as follows:

Q1 (April-June 2005) - 9.3

Q2 (July – September 2005) - 9.51

Q3 (October – December 2005) - 9.12

Quarter 4 traditionally shows the highest absence levels as this includes winter months when sickness is more prevalent. Quarter 4 figures will be available in May 2006.

2. The National and Regional Picture

In March 2006 the Local Authorities Employers Organisational produced a report "*Sickness Absence In Local Government*". This contained data relating to employee sickness absence for the year ending 31 March 2005. In particular it provides useful information that enables the Council to compare performance with like councils.

In 2004/05 the average employee sickness absence in county, unitary and metropolitan district councils was **11.5** days. Walsall's performance over the same period was **11.02** days. The quartile performance for all single and upper tier Councils for 2004/05 is as follows:

Quartile	Average No of Days Lost
Lower	9.9
Median	11.5
Upper	12.8
Walsall Council outturn	11.02

At 11.02 days, Walsall's performance during this period is in the median quartile. Looking at absence rates in Walsall for 2005/06, the Council's estimated performance for this year would put us in the lower (ie. best) quartile if absence levels in the final quarter are on a par with the first three quarters of the year. However, as absence tends to peak in the winter months, this outcome currently looks unlikely, unless the patterns of previous years are not followed. This of course is based on an assumption that there will be no change in performance nationally.

As regards to the regional picture, the average number of days lost through sickness absence in upper and single tier Council's in the West Midlands in 2004/05 was 12.3 days. Walsall Council's performance was an improvement on this average by 1.02 days.

Directorate Performance

The figures for each directorate for the first 2 quarters of 2005/06 is as follows:

Directorate	Average No of Days Lost
Neighbourhood Services	9.33
Childrens Services	11.80
Corporate Services	6.05
Regeneration	3.62
Social Care & Inclusion	6.45

Long Term Sickness

For the purposes of this report, all cases of employee absences of 6 months or more have been reported. Under the Council's Managing Sickness Absence Policy introduced in June 2004, an absence of 6 months triggers a final case review at which point the matter is considered by a senior manager who will consider the

employees ongoing employment position. Prior to this point welfare visits will have taken place and occupational health advice will have been taken.

To date there have been 88 instances of employees being absent from work for 6 months or more. An analysis of reasons for absence is set out below:

Absences of 6 months or more in 2005/06

Reason for Absence	No of Employees	% of total
Back	12	13.64
Chest	5	5.68
Eye	6	6.82
Heart	6	6.82
Musculo Skeletal	23	26.13
Genito Urinary	2	2.27
Stomach	4	4.54
Stress	19	21.59
Miscellaneous Infection	1	1.14
Neurological	1	1.14
Other	9	10.23
TOTAL	88	100%

Of these cases 13 employees have been dismissed.

Management Information

All Council employees (except teachers) are now paid via the Council's integrated HR/Payroll system. Consequently improvements have been made to the reporting of management information. Managers now have access to a secure site which gives details of absence for their reports and shows when a notification of concern is due and whether or not a return to work interview has been carried out. Performance against these standards is now routinely presented to management teams and performance boards along with headline employee absence data. This will enable managers to better track the management of sickness absence in their own areas.

As part of the HR transformation programme, the process for recording and managing sickness will be simplified and there will be a greater move away from paper based systems thus speeding up the process. Further developments to the HR/Payroll integrated system will enable managers to receive online prompts that action is needed on cases such as a return to work interview or a welfare visit.

Author:

Paul Smith - Head of Human Resources

☎ 01922 653277

✉ smithpaul@walsall.gov.uk