

Analysis of Sickness Absence in the
NI Departments


2001/2002

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This report was compiled by:-

The Human Resource Research & Evaluation Branch
of NISRA.


Rosepark House
Upper Newtownards Road
Belfast
BT4 3NR

Executive Summary

Overall

- During 2001/2002, 6.8% of available working days were lost as a result of sickness absence. This represents an average loss of 15.1 days per staff year.
- In direct paybill costs alone, sickness absence is estimated to have cost in the region of £22.3 million.
- At an overall level, the absence rates have remained exactly the same as those recorded for last year.
- The vast majority of the working days lost (76.9%) were due to a relatively small proportion of staff (14.6%).
- Approximately one in five staff (18.6%) were absent from work on three or more separate occasions during the year, accounting for almost two fifths (38.8%) of the total working days lost.
- The largest proportion of the working days lost was due to *Psychiatric/ Psychological illnesses* (24.6%), which lasted almost 38 working days (approximately 8 weeks) on average. This was a noticeable increase from the previous financial year, when 20.4% of the working days lost were as a result of this illness category.
- Almost four fifths (79.3%) of the total working days lost were covered by a medical certificate.
- Monday was the most common day for the onset of both certified and self-certified absences.

Key Variations

- Departmental absence rates ranged from 5.2% (11.4 days per staff year) in DRD, to 8.6% (19.0 days per staff year) in DEL.
- The absence rate was highest among staff analogous to Administrative Officer level, who lost approximately one in ten (9.5%) of their available working days. This was equivalent to 21.2 days per staff year.
- The absence rate among females was approximately twice that of males (9.1% versus 4.5%).
- Staff in the 16-24 age category had the lowest overall absence rate (5.5%), while those aged 55 and over had the highest (7.4%).

Long-term Absence

- Some 65% of the total working days lost during 2001/2002 were attributable to long-term absences. A total of 3,029 staff (11.6%) had at least one spell of long-term absence during the year.
- *Psychiatric/ Psychological illnesses* accounted for some 33.4% of the total working days lost as a result of long-term absence.

Chapter 1
Working Days Lost Through Sickness Absence

1. Working Days Lost Through Sickness Absence

1.1 Introduction

This report presents sickness absence statistics for non-industrial staff (including casuals) in the NI Departments during the 2001/2002 financial year. When reporting sickness absence statistics it is common to express absence rates in terms of the percentage of available working days lost and the number of days lost per person. However, it is recognised that the latter of these measures does not always permit valid comparisons to be made between or within organisations which have a high proportion of part-time staff and/or high levels of staff turnover.

To address this issue the Cabinet Office recommend that such figures are expressed in terms of days lost per staff year, where a staff year equals the number of days a full-time employee is contracted to work (i.e. weekends, statutory holidays and annual leave are excluded). In keeping with this recommendation, absence rates are expressed throughout Chapter 1 in terms of the percentage of available working days lost and working days lost per staff year. For the vast majority of people, a staff year amounted to 223 working days during 2001/2002, but clearly depends on date of entry and/or date of leaving, and annual leave entitlement which varies by grade, length of service, and work pattern. Definitions of the various absence rates used throughout the report can be found in Appendix 1.

1.2 Overall Absence Rates

Across the eleven NI Departments, some 6.8% of available working days were lost among non-industrial staff as a result of sickness absence during the 2001/2002 financial year. This represents an average loss of 15.1 days per staff year and, in paybill terms, is estimated to have cost in the region of £22.3 million. At an overall level the absence rates are the same as those recorded for the previous financial year, namely 6.8% of available working days (15.1 days per staff year).

As illustrated in Figure 1, almost four fifths (79.3%) of the working days lost were covered by a medical certificate, giving rise to a certified absence rate of 5.4% (12.0 days per staff year). Shorter term absences covered by self-certification accounted for just over one fifth (20.7%) of the working days that were lost, resulting in a self-certified absence rate of 1.4% (3.1 days per staff year).

Figure 1
Proportion of Working Days Lost by Certification

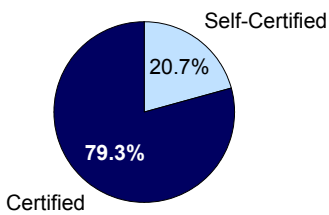
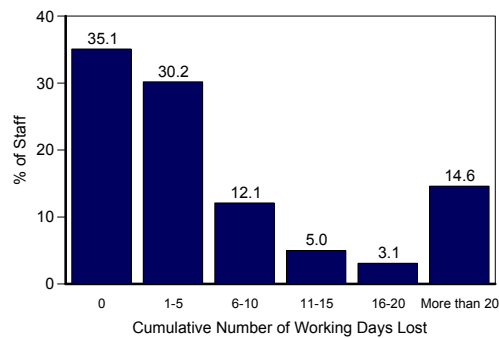


Figure 2
Distribution of Working Days Lost



1.3 Distribution of Working Days Lost

During 2001/2002, 64.9% of staff were absent on at least one occasion. This proportion was similar to the previous financial year (64.8%).

An analysis of the cumulative number of working days lost during 2001/2002 revealed that approximately 15% of staff lost more than 20 working days over the course of the year, accounting for 76.9% of the total working days lost. By way of contrast, only 6.6% of the total working days lost during 2001/2002 were attributable to the 30.2% of staff who lost between one and five working days.

Clearly for some staff the above analysis relates to the working days lost over more than one spell of absence. A detailed analysis of long-term absences (i.e. those which lasted for more than 20 working days) is presented in Chapter 5. Absences of this type accounted for almost 65% of the working days lost.

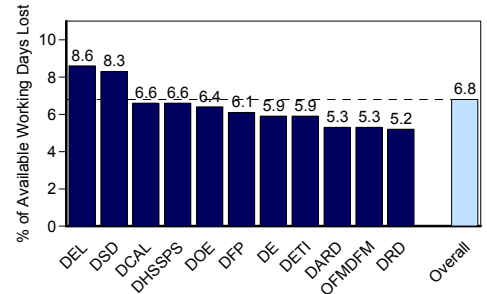
1.4 Department

Across the Departments, absence rates ranged from 8.6% in DEL, to 5.2% in DRD during 2001/2002. As shown in Table 1 of Appendix 2, the absence rate in DEL was equivalent to a loss of 19.0 days per staff year, whereas the rate in DRD amounted to 11.4 days per staff year.

It is evident from the information presented throughout this report that levels of absenteeism vary considerably by grade, gender and age. As such, the staffing structure of a Department will have a major bearing on its overall absence rate. The extent to which these factors can affect the overall absence rate is illustrated through standardised rates presented in Appendix 3.

Figure 3

Departmental Absence Rates



Note:

1. Staff from the Parliamentary Commissioner for Complaints and the Planning Appeals Commission are included in the DFP figure.
2. Staff from HSENI and OFREG are included in the DETI figure.

1.5 Grade Level

The absence rate was highest among staff analogous to Administrative Officer level, who lost 9.5% of their available working days as a result of sickness absence during the financial year. As shown in Table 2 of Appendix 2, this was equivalent to an average loss of 21.2 days per staff year.

At EOII level and above, the absence rate decreased at each successive grade level. As highlighted in Figure 4 and Table 2 of Appendix 2, staff at Grade 5 and above had the lowest overall absence rate, losing 2.1% of their available working days (4.5 days per staff year on average).

Figure 4

Absence Rates by Grade Level

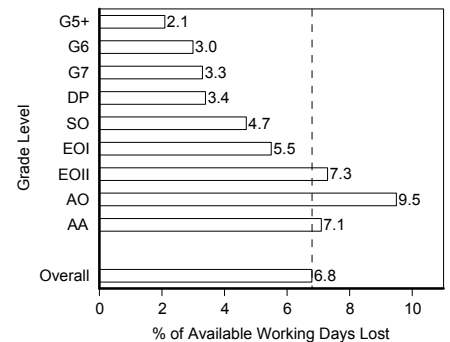
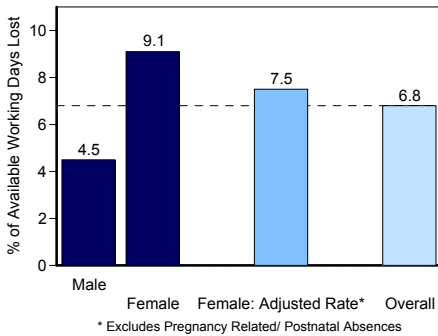


Figure 5

Absence Rates by Gender



1.6 Gender

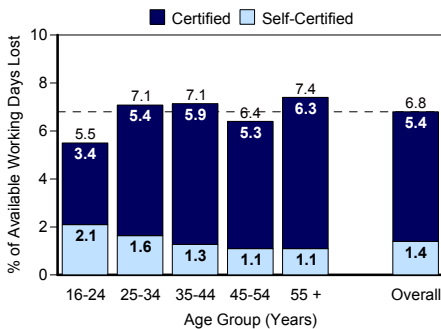
During 2001/2002, the absence rate among females was approximately twice that of males (9.1% versus 4.5%).

As highlighted in Table 3 of Chapter 3, 18.5% of the working days lost among females were attributable to Pregnancy Related/ Postnatal absences. When these absences were removed from the calculations the absence rate among females, while reducing to 7.5%, remained markedly higher than that of males.

Table 3 of Appendix 2 highlights that the absence rate among females was equivalent to a loss of 20.1 days per staff year on average. This compares with a figure of 10.0 days for males. When Pregnancy Related/ Postnatal absences were excluded, the figure for females reduced to 16.7 days per staff year.

Figure 6

Absence Rates by Age Group



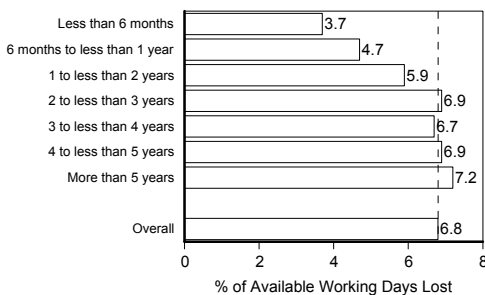
1.7 Age Group

The absence rates of staff in the various age groups ranged from a low of 5.5% among those aged 16-24, to a high of 7.4% among those aged 55 and over.

The self-certified absence rate, which generally decreased with age, was highest among those aged 16-24 (2.1%). Certified absence rates, which generally increased with age, ranged from a low of 3.4% among staff in this age category, to a high of 6.3% among those aged 55 and over.

Figure 7

Absence Rates by Length of Service



1.8 Length of Service

During 2001/2002, the absence rates among staff who had been in the Civil Service for less than 2 years were lower than for those in service for more than 2 years.

Staff in service for more than 5 years had the highest absence rate, losing 7.2% of their available working days.

Chapter 2
Spells of Sickness Absence

2. Spells of Sickness Absence

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter we turn our attention to the number of recorded spells of sickness absence for staff in the NI Departments during the 2001/2002 financial year. For comparison purposes, absence rates are expressed throughout in terms of the number of spells of absence per staff year. Supporting information which shows the average duration of both self-certified and certified absences can be found in Tables 5 to 7 of Appendix 2.

2.2 Number of Absence Spells

As shown in Figure 8, just over 35% of staff had no recorded spells of sickness absence during 2001/2002. While 27.6% of staff had one recorded absence, approximately one in five (18.8%) were absent on two separate occasions during the year. The remainder of staff (18.6%) were absent from work through illness on three or more occasions. Overall, non-industrial staff in the NI Departments had an average of 1.6 spells of sickness absence per staff year during 2001/2002.

2.3 Duration of Absence Spells

The vast majority (78.1%) of absence spells during 2001/2002 were short-term, lasting for five working days or less. These absences accounted for just over one fifth (20.2%) of the total working days lost. Approximately one tenth (9.5%) of all spells of absence were long-term in nature (i.e. those lasting for more than 20 working days). These absence spells accounted for 65% of the total working days lost.

Figure 8

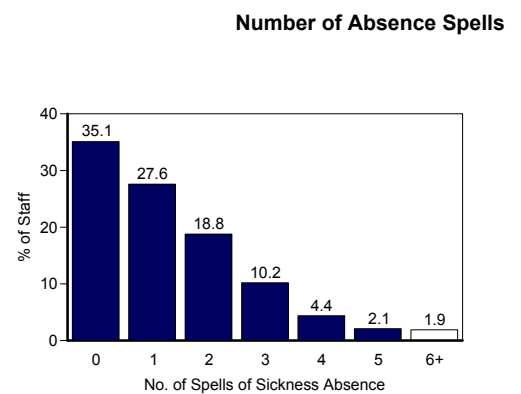


Figure 9

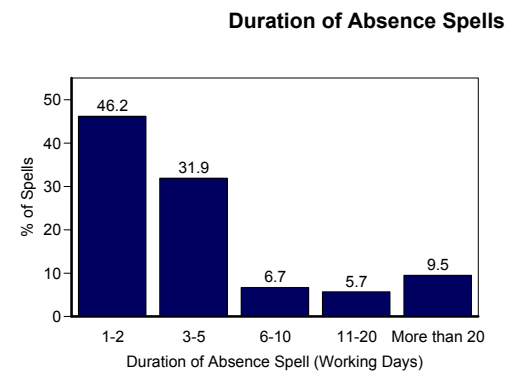


Figure 10

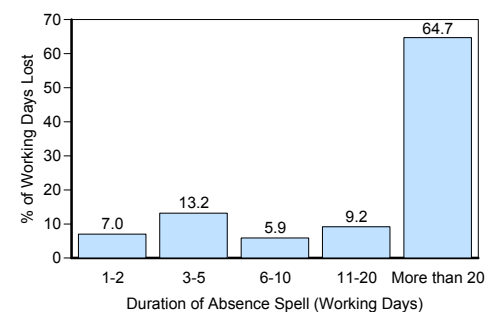
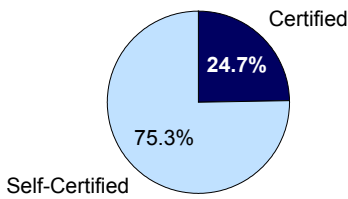


Figure 11

Proportion of Absence Spells by Certification

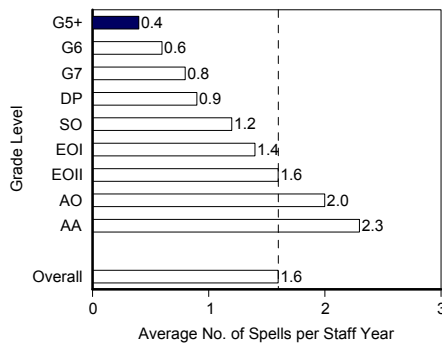


2.4 Self-Certified/ Certified Spells¹

Approximately three out of every four (75.3%) spells of sickness absence were self-certified. The remainder (24.7%) were covered by a medical certificate. On average, self-certified absences lasted 2.6 working days whereas certified absences lasted just over 30 working days.

Figure 12

Absence Spells by Grade Level



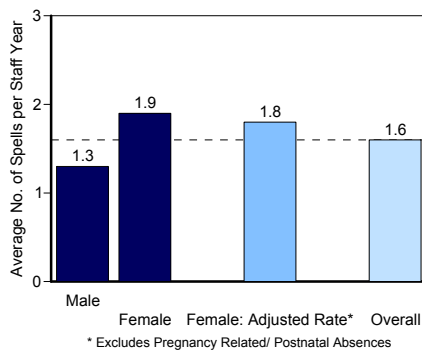
2.5 Grade Level

As shown in Figure 12, the average number of spells per staff year decreased with each successive grade up to Grade 5 level and above. Clearly staff at AA and AO levels were absent most frequently during 2001/2002, with an average of 2.3 and 2.0 spells of sickness absence per staff year respectively. On average, both self-certified and certified absences among AOs lasted longer than those among AAs, which goes some way to explaining the noticeable difference in their overall absence rates (AOs lost 9.5% of their available working days whereas AAs lost 7.1%).

The duration of self-certified absences showed little variation across the grade levels, ranging from just over 2 working days at Grade 5 level and above to just over 3 working days at Grade 7 level. However, the average duration of certified absences ranged from a low of under 27 working days at AA level, to a high of just over 35 working days at Grade 5 level and above (See Table 5 in Appendix 2).

Figure 13

Absence Spells by Gender



2.6 Gender

Females were absent more frequently than males during 2001/2002 (1.9 spells per staff year on average, compared with 1.3 for males). The exclusion of Pregnancy Related/ Postnatal absences, which were experienced by 6.6% (897) of the females included in the analysis and were typically long-term in nature, had little effect on the average number of spells per staff year among females.

In staff year terms, approximately five out of every ten females and three out of every ten males had a certified spell of absence during 2001/2002. On average, these spells lasted for approximately 32 and 27 working days respectively (See Table 6 of Appendix 2).

¹ By comparing these results with the information presented on the duration of absence spells, the reader will notice that some of the absence spells which lasted five working days or less were certified.

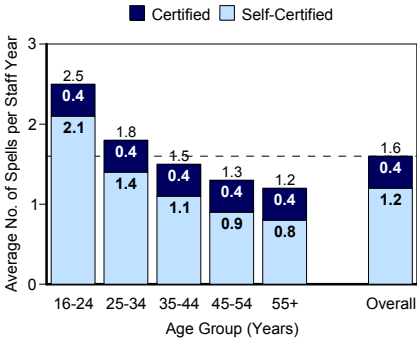
2.7 Age Group

The average number of spells of sickness absence decreased with age, with staff in the 16-24 age group being absent most frequently (2.5 spells per staff year). However, as already highlighted in Figure 6 of Chapter 1, staff in this group had the lowest overall absence rate, losing 5.5% of their available working days.

As shown in Table 7 of Appendix 2, the average duration of certified absences was noticeably lowest among those aged 16-24 (approximately 21 working days), and highest among those aged 55 and over (38 working days).

Figure 14

Absence Spells by Age Group

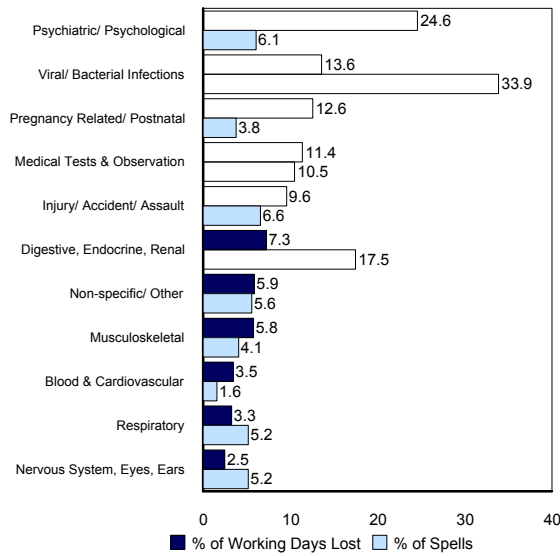


Chapter 3
Reasons for Sickness Absence

3. Reasons for Sickness Absence

Figure 15

Overall Reasons for Absence



3.1 Overall

During the 2001/2002 financial year, over one third (33.9%) of absence spells were due to *Viral/ Bacterial Infections* (mainly colds & flu). While the majority of these spells were short-term in nature, on a cumulative basis they accounted for the second largest proportion of the working days that were lost throughout the year (13.6%). A further 7.3% of the working days lost were associated with *Digestive, Endocrine & Renal illnesses*, which are also typically short-term in nature. Absences in this category accounted for the second largest proportion of absence spells (17.5%).

The largest proportion of the working days lost, however, were accounted for by *Psychiatric/ Psychological illnesses*, which tend to be more long-term in nature. Absences in this category, which includes Depression, Anxiety, Stress and Life Management Difficulties, accounted for approximately one quarter (24.6%) of the working days lost over the course of the year. This was a noticeable increase from the previous financial year, when 20.4% of the working days lost were as a result of this illness category.

Pregnancy Related/ Postnatal illnesses accounted for 3.8% of absence spells and 12.6% of the working days lost.

Table 1

Average Duration of Absences by Reason

Reason for Absence	Average Duration (Working Days)
Psychiatric/ Psychological	37.9
Pregnancy Related/ Postnatal	31.4
Blood & Cardiovascular	21.0
Injury/ Accident/ Assault	13.6
Musculoskeletal	13.4
Medical Tests & Observation	10.2
Non-specific/ Other	9.8
Respiratory	6.0
Nervous System, Eyes, Ears	4.5
Digestive, Endocrine, Renal	3.9
Viral/ Bacterial Infections	3.8

Table 1 provides information on the average duration of absence spells by illness category. It shows that the average duration varied from just under 4 working days for absences due to *Viral/Bacterial Infections*, to almost 38 working days (8 weeks) for absences resulting from *Psychiatric/Psychological illnesses*.

Table 2

Reasons for Absence by Grade Level

Reason for Absence	% of Working Days Lost								
	G5+	G6	G7	DP	SO	EOI	EOII	AO	AA
Non-specific/ Other	10.3	4.1	11.2	5.2	4.8	5.1	5.4	6.7	4.8
Medical Tests & Observation	5.0	18.4	20.0	11.0	14.6	17.8	8.9	9.5	11.7
Injury/ Accident/ Assault	20.8	7.6	8.9	8.0	10.4	12.9	8.1	9.2	9.7
Viral/ Bacterial Infections	8.2	13.8	15.6	18.7	15.6	12.3	13.6	12.3	15.4
Psychiatric/ Psychological	33.7	42.8	18.7	23.1	23.8	22.2	27.0	25.9	20.9
Pregnancy Related/ Postnatal	4.0	1.5	6.4	6.4	6.5	8.1	15.0	16.0	10.2
Nervous System, Eyes, Ears	0.2	2.1	2.2	2.8	2.9	2.5	2.1	2.6	2.5
Digestive, Endocrine, Renal	11.2	6.0	4.0	6.5	8.0	6.2	6.5	6.6	11.1
Respiratory	4.5	1.8	4.1	3.7	4.5	2.9	3.6	3.1	3.2
Blood & Cardiovascular	0.3	1.8	5.1	6.2	4.8	3.8	4.8	2.3	3.6
Musculoskeletal	2.0	0.2	3.8	8.5	4.0	6.3	4.9	5.9	6.8
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

3.2 Grade Level

Table 2 shows, for each grade level, the percentage of the total working days lost attributable to each reason for absence. Shading has been used in the table to highlight the illness category which accounted for the largest proportion of the working days lost at each grade level.

The information shows that *Psychiatric/ Psychological illnesses* accounted for the largest proportion of the working days lost among staff at all grade levels with the exception of Grade 7 level.

Table 3

Reasons for Absence by Gender

Reason for Absence	% of Working Days Lost	
	Male	Female
Non-specific/ Other	6.7	5.9
Medical Tests & Observation	14.7	9.7
Injury/ Accident/ Assault	11.1	8.8
Viral/ Bacterial Infections	17.3	11.7
Psychiatric/ Psychological	24.6	24.5
Pregnancy Related/ Postnatal	n/a	18.5
Nervous System, Eyes, Ears	2.6	2.4
Digestive, Endocrine, Renal	7.6	7.2
Respiratory	4.5	2.7
Blood & Cardiovascular	4.5	3.0
Musculoskeletal	6.5	5.5
Total	100	100

3.3 Gender

Table 3 shows that *Psychiatric/ Psychological illnesses* accounted for almost one quarter (24.6%) of the total working days lost among males. *Viral/ Bacterial Infections* accounted for a further 17.3%, and *Medical Tests & Observation* for 14.7%.

Among females, *Psychiatric/ Psychological illnesses* also accounted for almost one quarter (24.5%) of the total working days lost. *Pregnancy Related/ Postnatal illnesses* accounted for the second largest proportion of the working days lost among females (18.5%), and *Viral/ Bacterial Infections* the third (11.7%).

3.4 Age Group

As one might expect, the reasons for absence varied considerably with age. For example, short-term absences arising from *Viral/ Bacterial Infections* accounted for the largest proportion of the working days lost among staff aged 16-24 (22.7%). However, among those in the older age groups (i.e. 35-44, 45-54 and 55+), absences due to *Psychiatric/Psychological illnesses* accounted for over one quarter of the working days lost.

At 24.0%, *Pregnancy Related/ Postnatal illnesses* accounted for the largest proportion of the working days lost among staff aged 25-34, followed by *Psychiatric/Psychological illnesses* (20.0%).

3.5 Certification

Viral/ Bacterial Infections (mainly colds and flu) accounted for two fifths (40.6%) of the working days lost through self-certified absences, which was very similar to the previous financial year (40.8%). A further 15.7% of the working days lost through self-certified absences were associated with *Digestive, Endocrine & Renal illnesses*, while 11.5% were due to *Medical Tests & Observation*.

Psychiatric/ Psychological illnesses accounted for almost three tenths of the working days lost through certified absences (29.9%), followed by *Pregnancy Related/ Postnatal illnesses* (15.4%). A further 11.4% of the working days lost through certified absences were due to *Medical Tests & Observation*.

Table 4

Reasons for Absence by Age Group

Reason for Absence	% of Working Days Lost				
	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+
Non-specific/ Other	4.5	5.6	6.2	6.6	4.9
Medical Tests & Observation	9.4	8.3	11.2	14.3	16.3
Injury/ Accident/ Assault	10.0	8.1	10.9	9.4	8.6
Viral/ Bacterial Infections	22.7	14.2	12.4	12.1	10.3
Psychiatric/ Psychological	17.6	20.0	26.7	28.2	27.8
Pregnancy Related/ Postnatal	12.6	24.0	12.2	3.5	3.0
Nervous System, Eyes, Ears	2.1	3.1	2.2	2.5	2.1
Digestive, Endocrine, Renal	12.0	7.6	6.5	7.2	5.1
Respiratory	3.9	3.1	2.9	3.7	4.3
Blood & Cardiovascular	1.7	1.3	2.7	5.7	9.7
Musculoskeletal	3.3	4.8	6.1	6.8	8.0
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Table 5

Reasons for Absence by Certification

Reason for Absence	% of Working Days Lost	
	Self-Certified	Certified
Non-specific/ Other	5.0	6.1
Medical Tests & Observation	11.5	11.4
Injury/ Accident/ Assault	6.0	10.5
Viral/ Bacterial Infections	40.6	6.5
Psychiatric/ Psychological	3.9	29.9
Pregnancy Related/ Postnatal	1.9	15.4
Nervous System, Eyes, Ears	4.5	2.0
Digestive, Endocrine, Renal	15.7	5.1
Respiratory	5.9	2.6
Blood & Cardiovascular	1.3	4.0
Musculoskeletal	3.7	6.4
Total	100	100

Chapter 4
Onset of Sickness Absence

4. Onset of Sickness Absence

In this chapter we turn our attention to the onset of absences, with the analyses in paragraphs 4.1 and 4.2 referring to those spells which started during the 2001/2002 financial year.

4.1 Analysis by Month during 2001/2002

As might be expected, there was noticeable variation in the onset of both certified and self-certified absences. For both categories however, the onset of absences was noticeably higher in the months of October, November and January. July was the least common month for self-certified absences to commence. With 6.3% of all certified absences commencing in December, this was the least common month for the onset of an absence of this type.

The proportions of both certified and self-certified absences which commenced in April were noticeably higher than in the previous year (certified: 8.3% versus 6.7%; self-certified: 7.3% versus 6.4%). However, the May and June certified and self-certified proportions were both lower than in the previous year.

4.2 Analysis by Weekday during 2001/2002

As in the previous year, approximately one third of all certified and self-certified absences commenced on a Monday, making it the most common day for the onset of an absence.

With the exception of Saturday and Sunday, Friday was the least likely day for an absence to begin. Just over 11% of both certified and self-certified absences started on this day.

Figure 16

Onset of Absence by Month during 2001/2002

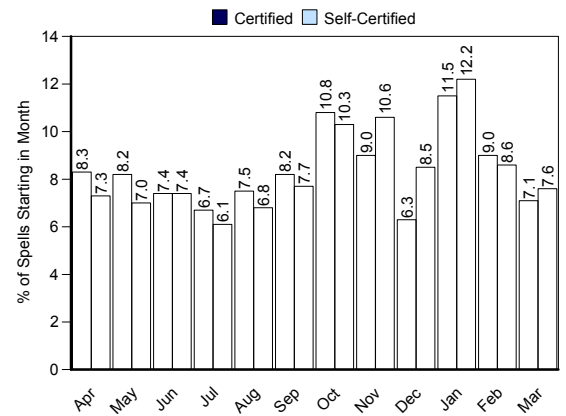
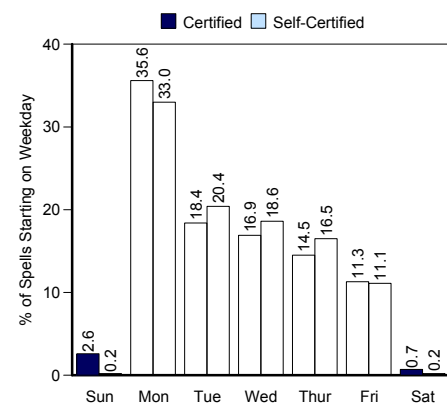


Figure 17

Onset of Absence by Weekday during 2001/2002

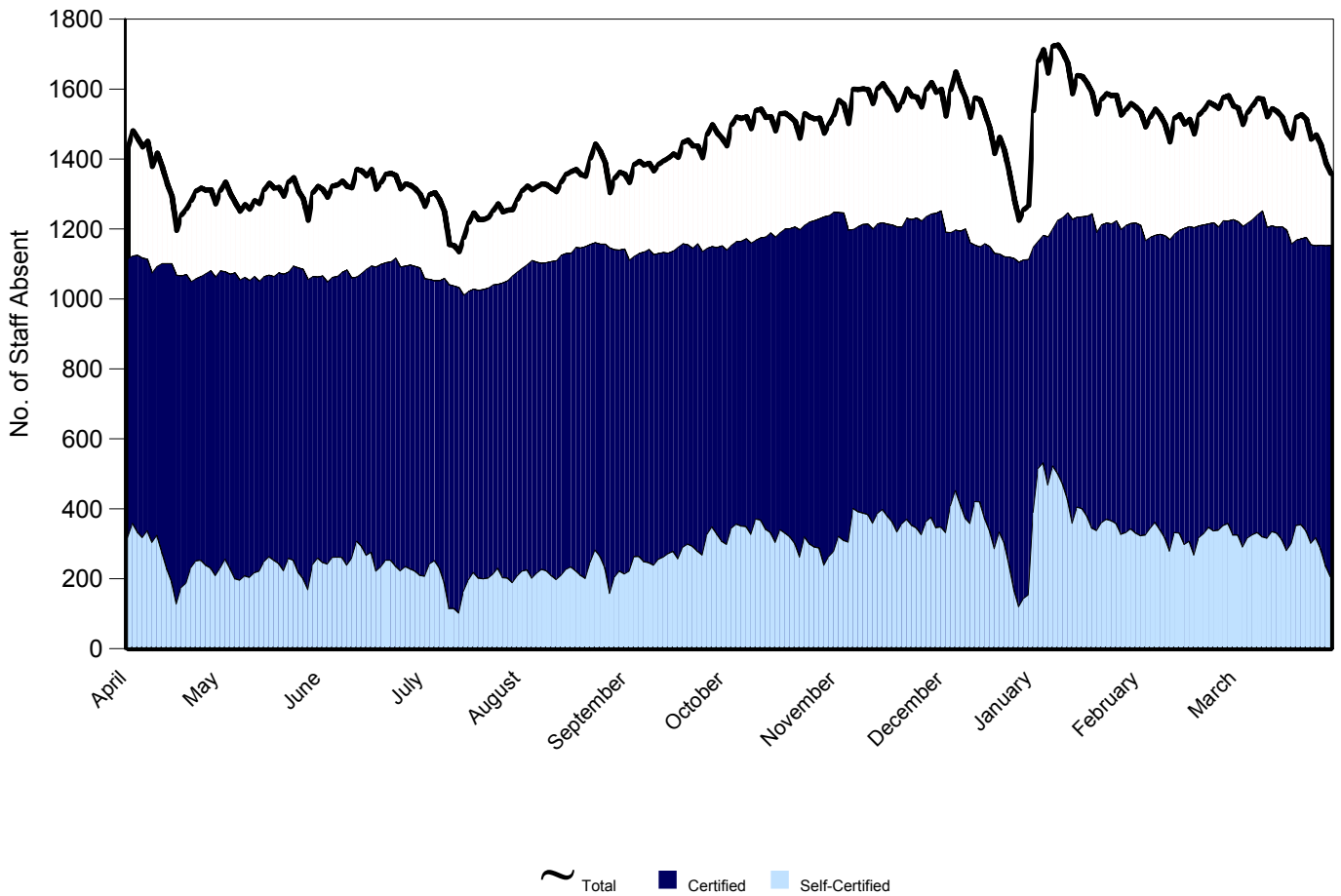


4.3 Number of Staff Absent during 2001/2002

Figure 18 provides an illustration of the daily variation in the number of staff absent throughout the year. The underlying figures reveal that the number of staff who were absent ranged from a low of 1,135 on Wednesday 11th July 2001 (i.e. immediately preceding the 12th and 13th of July statutory holidays), to a high of 1,726 on Wednesday 9th January 2002. As with last year, the fluctuation in the total number of absentees throughout the year on a daily basis can, in large part, be accounted for by the variation in the number of self-certified absences. The number of certified absences was more predictable, averaging 1,145 on a daily basis.

Figure 18

Number of Staff Absent on Each Day during 2001/2002



Chapter 5
Long-term Sickness Absence

5. Long-term Sickness Absence

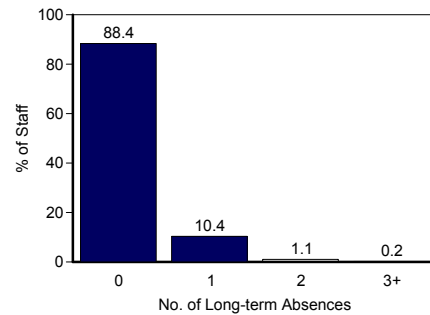
In this chapter we turn our attention to long-term absences which, by definition, are those which lasted more than 20 working days.

5.1 Prevalence of Long-term Absence

A total of 3,029 staff (11.6%) in the NI Departments had one or more spells of long-term absence during the 2001/2002 financial year, resulting in a loss of over 217,000 available working days. This was equivalent to losing the work of approximately 974 full-time staff for the entire year and, as already highlighted in Chapter 2, accounted for 64.7% of the total working days lost throughout the year. The cost to the paybill of these long-term absences is estimated to be in the region of £13.8m.

Figure 19

Analysis of the Number of Long-term Absence Spells



Number of Long-term Absences	Number of Staff	Percentage of Staff
0	22,995	88.4
1	2,705	10.4
2	276	1.1
3+	48	0.2
Total	26,024	100

5.2 Reason for Absence

Psychiatric/ Psychological illnesses accounted for one third (33.4%) of the total working days lost during 2001/2002 as a result of long-term absences. *Pregnancy Related/ Postnatal illness* accounted for a further 17.0% and *Medical Tests & Observation* for 11.3%. Approximately one in every ten (10.2%) of the working days lost through long-term absences were recorded under the *Injury/ Accident/ Assault* category.

Figure 20

Reason for Long-term Absences (% of Working Days Lost)

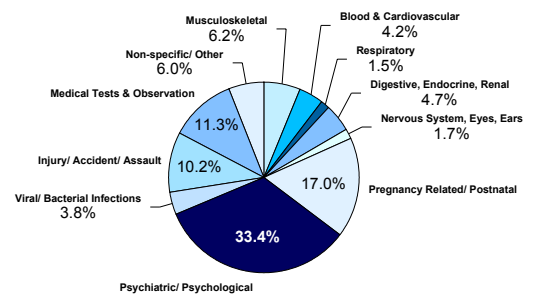
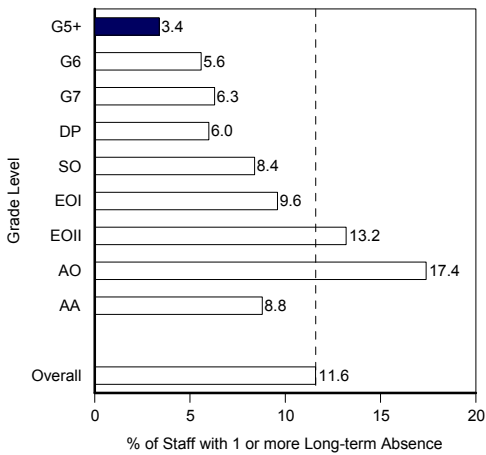


Figure 21

Long-term Spells by Grade Level

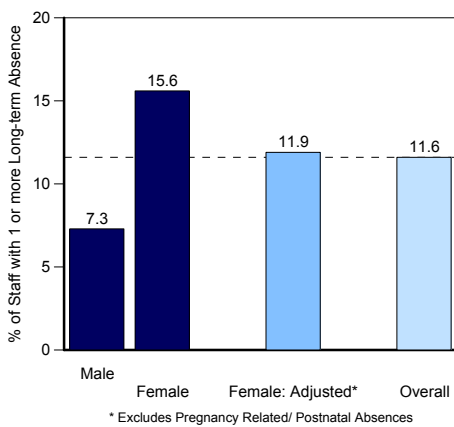


5.3 Grade Level

Figure 21 shows that, as with the previous two years, the incidence of long-term absence was highest among staff at AO level. As highlighted in Table 1 of Appendix 4, over 68% of the total working days lost at this level were attributable to those staff (17.4%) who had one or more spells of long-term absence during the period in question. On average, long-term absences among staff at AO level lasted 13.0 working weeks. Across the grade levels, the incidence of long-term absence was lowest at Grade 5 level and above, with 3.4% of staff having one or more spells of long-term absence. However, the average duration of these absences was noticeably longer than for any other grade level (17.0 working weeks), and accounted for almost 69% of the total working days lost at this level.

Figure 22

Long-term Spells by Gender



5.4 Gender

A higher proportion of females (15.6%) than males (7.3%) had one or more spells of long-term absence. When all long-term Pregnancy Related/ Postnatal absences were excluded from the calculations, the proportion of females who had one or more spells of long-term absence reduced to 11.9% (See Figure 22).

The average durations of long-term absence among males and females were similar (12.6 and 12.8 working weeks respectively). That said, as in the previous year, a noticeably higher proportion of the total working days lost among females was attributable to long-term absence (68.2% among females versus 57.8% among males).

5.5 Age Group

Figure 23 shows that the incidence of long-term absence was lowest in the 16-24 age group, with 6.0% of staff having one or more spells of long-term absence during 2001/2002. On average, these absences lasted just under 11 working weeks and accounted for 43.5% of the total working days lost among staff in this age category.

Staff in the 35-44 age group were most likely to be absent on a long-term basis, with 13.4% having one or more spells of long-term absence. Just over 67% of the total working days lost among staff in this age category were attributable to these long-term absences, which lasted approximately 13 working weeks on average.

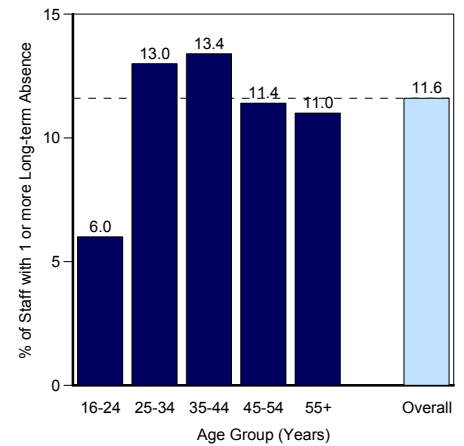
Almost three quarters (74.6%) of the total working days lost among those aged 55 and over were attributable to long-term absences.

Approximately 11% of staff in this group had one or more spells of long-term absence during the year, lasting 16.3 weeks on average (See Table 3 of Appendix 4).

The reader should note that Appendix 4 also provides information on the number of long-term absence spells per 100 staff years for each of the analyses contained in this chapter. This is in keeping with Cabinet Office guidelines and, in essence, gives a measure of the number of long-term absences which might be expected to occur among a group of 100 staff working full-time for the entire year.

Figure 23

Long-term Absence Spells by Age Group



APPENDIX 1
Definitions

Appendix 1

Definitions

Absence rates are presented in a number of ways throughout the report and are defined as follows:-

$$\text{\% of Available Working Days Lost} = \frac{\text{Number of Working Days Lost}}{\text{Number of Available Working Days}} \times 100$$

$$\text{Working Days Lost per Staff Year} = \frac{\text{Number of Working Days Lost}}{\text{Number of Staff Years}}$$

$$\text{Spells per Staff Year} = \frac{\text{Number of Absence Spells}}{\text{Number of Staff Years}}$$

The “Working days lost per staff year” approach was recommended by the Cabinet Office in the review “*Working Well Together: Managing Attendance in the Public Sector*”. This approach replaces working days lost per person which can understate the absence rate in organisations which have a high proportion of part-time staff and/or high levels of staff turnover. The following simple example highlights the rationale for the methodological change.

There are 2 members of staff **A** and **B**.

- A.** Worked Full-time all year (hence 1 staff year), and
- B.** Worked Full-time for ½ year (hence ½ staff year)

If **A** was absent for 10 working days and **B** was absent for 20 working days, then the number of working days lost per staff year would be calculated as follows:-

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Total Number of working days lost} &= 30 \\ \text{Total Number of Staff Years} &= 1 + 0.5 = 1.5 \end{aligned}$$

$$\text{Working days lost per staff year} = \frac{30}{1.5} = 20$$

According to the former methodology, the number of days lost per person would equal,

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Total Number of working days lost} &= 30 \\ \text{Total Number of People} &= 2 \end{aligned}$$

$$\text{Working days lost per person} = \frac{30}{2} = 15$$

APPENDIX 2
Tables Relating to Chapters 1 & 2

Tables relating to Chapter 1

Table 1

Department	No. of Working Days Lost per Staff Year		
	Self-Certified	Certified	Total
DEL	4.5	14.5	19.0
DSD	3.2	15.3	18.4
DCAL	4.4	10.2	14.6
DHSSPS	3.4	11.2	14.6
DOE	3.2	11.0	14.1
DFP	2.8	10.7	13.5
DE	2.6	10.5	13.2
DETI	4.2	8.9	13.0
DARD	2.6	9.3	11.8
OFMDFM	2.6	9.1	11.6
DRD	2.6	8.7	11.4
Overall	3.1	12.0	15.1

Table 2

Grade Level	No. of Working Days Lost per Staff Year		
	Self-Certified	Certified	Total
G5+	0.5	4.0	4.5
G6	0.9	5.7	6.5
G7	1.8	5.4	7.2
DP	1.7	5.8	7.5
SO	2.3	8.0	10.3
EOI	2.8	9.4	12.1
EOII	3.1	13.1	16.2
AO	3.8	17.4	21.2
AA	4.3	11.6	16.0
Overall	3.1	12.0	15.1

Table 3

Gender	No. of Working Days Lost per Staff Year		
	Self-Certified	Certified	Total
Male	2.7	7.4	10.0
Female	3.6	16.5	20.1
Overall	3.1	12.0	15.1

Table 4

Age Group	No. of Working Days Lost per Staff Year		
	Self-Certified	Certified	Total
16-24	4.8	7.6	12.4
25-34	3.7	12.2	15.8
35-44	2.8	13.0	15.8
45-54	2.4	11.7	14.1
55+	2.3	13.9	16.2
Overall	3.1	12.0	15.1

Tables relating to Chapter 2

Table 5

Grade Level	Self-Certified Absences		Certified Absences		Total	
	No. of Spells per Staff Year	Average Duration (Working Days)	No. of Spells per Staff Year	Average Duration (Working Days)	No. of Spells per Staff Year	Average Duration (Working Days)
G5+	0.2	2.1	0.1	35.3	0.4	12.6
G6	0.4	2.2	0.2	30.6	0.6	11.2
G7	0.6	3.1	0.2	28.0	0.8	9.5
DP	0.7	2.4	0.2	28.7	0.9	8.3
SO	0.9	2.6	0.3	28.0	1.2	8.8
EOI	1.0	2.7	0.3	28.5	1.4	8.9
EOII	1.2	2.7	0.4	31.4	1.6	10.2
AO	1.4	2.7	0.5	32.1	2.0	10.8
AA	1.8	2.4	0.4	26.6	2.3	7.1
Overall	1.2	2.6	0.4	30.1	1.6	9.4

Table 6

Gender	Self-Certified Absences		Certified Absences		Total	
	No. of Spells per Staff Year	Average Duration (Working Days)	No. of Spells per Staff Year	Average Duration (Working Days)	No. of Spells per Staff Year	Average Duration (Working Days)
Male	1.0	2.6	0.3	27.3	1.3	7.8
Female	1.4	2.6	0.5	31.5	1.9	10.4
Overall	1.2	2.6	0.4	30.1	1.6	9.4

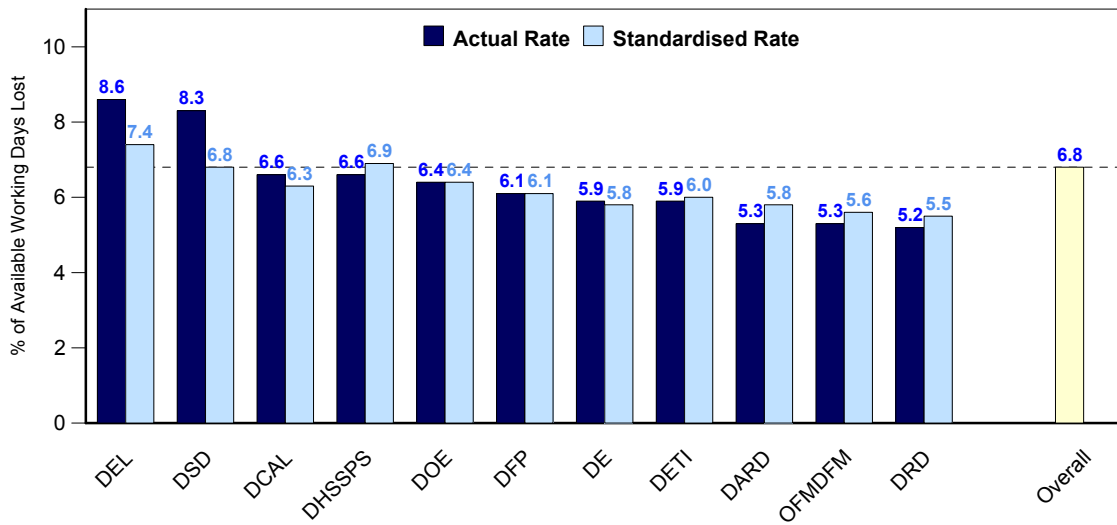
Table 7

Age Group	Self-Certified Absences		Certified Absences		Total	
	No. of Spells per Staff Year	Average Duration (Working Days)	No. of Spells per Staff Year	Average Duration (Working Days)	No. of Spells per Staff Year	Average Duration (Working Days)
16-24	2.1	2.3	0.4	21.2	2.5	5.0
25-34	1.4	2.6	0.4	28.2	1.8	8.7
35-44	1.1	2.6	0.4	31.0	1.5	10.5
45-54	0.9	2.7	0.4	32.5	1.3	11.3
55+	0.8	2.8	0.4	38.0	1.2	13.6
Overall	1.2	2.6	0.4	30.1	1.6	9.4

APPENDIX 3
Illustrative Standardised Departmental Absence Rates

Appendix 3

Departmental Absence Rates: Standardised to DFP Organisation Structure



Note: The above standardised figures are for illustrative purposes only.

APPENDIX 4
Tables Relating to Chapter 5

Tables relating to Chapter 5

Table 1

Grade Level	Long-term Absences		
	No. of Spells per 100 Staff Years	Average Duration (Working Weeks)	Percentage of the total working days lost attributable to long-term absence
G5+	3.7	17.0	68.7
G6	6.7	13.3	67.7
G7	7.3	12.9	65.8
DP	7.1	13.1	62.2
SO	10.5	12.2	62.2
EOI	12.4	12.3	62.6
EOII	17.2	12.5	66.6
AO	22.2	13.0	68.2
AA	14.3	12.6	56.6
Overall	15.3	12.7	64.7

Table 2

Gender	Long-term Absences		
	No. of Spells per 100 Staff Years	Average Duration (Working Weeks)	Percentage of the total working days lost attributable to long-term absence
Male	9.2	12.6	57.8
Female	21.4	12.8	68.2
Overall	15.3	12.7	64.7

Table 3

Age Group	Long-term Absences		
	No. of Spells per 100 Staff Years	Average Duration (Working Weeks)	Percentage of the total working days lost attributable to long-term absence
16-24	10.0	10.8	43.5
25-34	16.9	11.5	61.6
35-44	16.7	12.7	67.1
45-54	14.2	13.8	69.7
55+	14.8	16.3	74.6
Overall	15.3	12.7	64.7

APPENDIX 5
Year on Year Comparisons

Year on Year Comparisons

Table 1

Department	% of Available Working Days Lost			No. of Days Lost per Staff Year		
	1999/2000	2000/2001	2001/2002	1999/2000	2000/2001	2001/2002
DEL	7.4	8.1	8.6	16.5	17.9	19.0
DSD	8.3	8.4	8.3	18.5	18.6	18.4
DCAL	5.8	6.7	6.6	12.7	14.7	14.6
DHSSPS	6.4	5.8	6.6	14.1	12.9	14.6
DOE	6.6	6.6	6.4	14.6	14.6	14.1
DFP	5.1	5.8	6.1	11.3	12.8	13.5
DE	6.2	7.1	5.9	13.7	15.7	13.2
DETI	5.9	5.6	5.9	13.2	12.4	13.0
DARD	6.2	5.5	5.3	13.8	12.2	11.8
OFMDFM	4.7	4.4	5.3	10.4	9.7	11.6
DRD	5.2	5.5	5.2	11.4	12.2	11.4
Overall	6.9	6.8	6.8	15.3	15.1	15.1

Note: Due to the reorganisation of Departments following devolution, the 1999/2000 absence details were analysed according to the Department in which staff were employed at the end of the 1999/2000 financial year. As such the year on year comparisons are not entirely comparable.

Table 2

Grade Level	% of Available Working Days Lost			No. of Days Lost per Staff Year		
	1999/2000	2000/2001	2001/2002	1999/2000	2000/2001	2001/2002
G5+	2.2	2.2	2.1	4.8	4.7	4.5
G6	2.4	3.1	3.0	5.3	6.7	6.5
G7	2.8	2.5	3.3	6.1	5.5	7.2
DP	3.9	3.5	3.4	8.6	7.6	7.5
SO	4.6	4.1	4.7	10.0	8.9	10.3
EOI	5.2	5.3	5.5	11.6	11.6	12.1
EOII	7.1	7.4	7.3	15.8	16.3	16.2
AO	10.1	10.0	9.5	22.5	22.2	21.2
AA	7.1	7.0	7.1	15.9	15.6	16.0
Overall	6.9	6.8	6.8	15.3	15.1	15.1

Table 3

Gender	% of Available Working Days Lost			No. of Days Lost per Staff Year		
	1999/2000	2000/2001	2001/2002	1999/2000	2000/2001	2001/2002
Male	4.5	4.5	4.5	9.9	9.9	10.0
Female	9.4	9.2	9.1	21.0	20.5	20.1
Overall	6.9	6.8	6.8	15.3	15.1	15.1

Table 4

Age Group	% of Available Working Days Lost			No. of Days Lost per Staff Year		
	1999/2000	2000/2001	2001/2002	1999/2000	2000/2001	2001/2002
16-24	4.5	4.8	5.5	10.1	10.9	12.4
25-34	7.6	7.5	7.1	17.0	16.7	15.8
35-44	7.1	7.1	7.1	15.9	15.7	15.8
45-54	6.3	6.2	6.4	13.9	13.7	14.1
55+	7.4	7.3	7.4	16.2	16.0	16.2
Overall	6.9	6.8	6.8	15.3	15.1	15.1

Note: **Red** text denotes an increase in the absence rate from the previous financial year.
Green text denotes a reduction in the absence rate from the previous financial year.

Year on Year Comparisons

Table 5

Number of Absence Spells	% of Staff		
	1999/2000	2000/2001	2001/2002
0	32.6	35.2	35.1
1	27.0	26.8	27.6
2	19.2	19.0	18.8
3	11.3	10.2	10.2
4	5.3	5.0	4.4
5	2.4	2.0	2.1
6+	2.1	1.8	1.9

Table 6

Duration of Absence Spells (Working Days)	% of Spells		
	1999/2000	2000/2001	2001/2002
1-2	47.1	46.6	46.2
3-5	31.4	31.7	31.9
6-10	7.0	6.7	6.7
11-20	5.8	5.7	5.7
More than 20	8.8	9.3	9.5

Table 7

Reason	% of Absence Spells			% of Working Days Lost		
	1999/2000	2000/2001	2001/2002	1999/2000	2000/2001	2001/2002
Non-specific/ Other	5.2	5.3	5.6	4.8	4.5	5.9
Medical Tests & Observation	8.9	12.6	10.5	12.2	16.9	11.4
Injury/ Accident/ Assault	6.4	6.5	6.6	10.0	9.6	9.6
Viral/ Bacterial Infections	38.3	33.0	33.9	16.0	13.2	13.6
Psychiatric/ Psychological	4.7	4.8	6.1	19.6	20.4	24.6
Pregnancy Related/ Postnatal	4.2	4.0	3.8	14.1	12.3	12.6
Nervous System, Eyes, Ears	5.4	5.2	5.2	3.2	2.7	2.5
Digestive, Endocrine, Renal	16.0	17.7	17.5	6.9	8.0	7.3
Respiratory	4.9	5.4	5.2	3.3	3.5	3.3
Blood & Cardiovascular	1.6	1.5	1.6	3.7	3.4	3.5
Musculoskeletal	4.3	4.1	4.1	6.2	5.6	5.8

Note: **Red** text denotes an increase from the previous financial year.
Green text denotes a reduction from the previous financial year.

Year on Year Comparisons

Table 8

Long-term Absence by Grade Level	% of the Total Working Days Lost Attributable to Long-term Absence		
	1999/2000	2000/2001	2001/2002
G5+	69.7	63.0	68.7
G6	51.6	69.6	67.7
G7	57.3	60.3	65.8
DP	62.1	60.5	62.2
SO	59.5	57.6	62.2
EOI	56.2	59.8	62.6
EOII	62.6	66.6	66.6
AO	66.6	67.6	68.2
AA	55.2	57.9	56.6
Overall	62.0	64.0	64.7

Table 9

Long-term Absence by Gender	% of the Total Working Days Lost Attributable to Long-term Absence		
	1999/2000	2000/2001	2001/2002
Male	53.4	56.9	57.8
Female	66.3	67.5	68.2
Overall	62.0	64.0	64.7

Table 10

Long-term Absence by Age Group	% of the Total Working Days Lost Attributable to Long-term Absence		
	1999/2000	2000/2001	2001/2002
16 - 24	30.2	35.7	43.5
25 - 34	59.7	60.9	61.6
35 - 44	64.5	67.2	67.1
45 - 54	66.1	67.8	69.7
55+	69.0	73.3	74.6
Overall	62.0	64.0	64.7

Note: **Red** text denotes an increase from the previous financial year.
Green text denotes a reduction from the previous financial year.