

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

AUDIT COMMITTEE

SICKNESS ABSENCE

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 Inform the committee of the impact of the improvement plan for sickness absence in the council.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Sickness absence was highlighted by the Audit Commission in the council's Annual Audit and Inspection letter 2007/8 as a risk to capacity - "capacity is hampered at an operational level by increasing levels of staff sickness absence"
- 2.2 The Audit Committee sought assurances that the action taken was having an impact in reducing the risk and requested regular reports on the improvements made.
- 2.3 There has been another improvement in sickness absence and the council surpassed its annual target of 9.25 days. For the year 2010/11 the council reduced the annual sickness to 9.01 days. This was a 12% reduction from the 10.25 days reported in 2009/10
- 2.4 At its last meeting the Audit Committee asked for a comparison of the council's sickness with others. True comparison has been difficult as the national indicator has now ceased. Some assurance that the level is now not above average can however be provided. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development's annual survey shows public sector absence at 9.6 days. In addition the council has asked other unitary authorities for their 2010/11 figures and from those who responded an average rate of 9.37 days was calculated.
- 2.5 There is still variation in the performance of services (see appendix). There have been reductions in 10 of the areas reported on. All areas were set sickness reduction targets which have been monitored throughout the year.

These show 8 achieved the targets, 2 were slightly above target (up to 5%) and 4 above target (above 5%). It should be noted however that 2 areas that are above target do have absence levels which although below the council's average and are more likely to be variable due to the relatively small numbers of staff.

- 2.6 Further progress has been made in Children's Services on the improvement action instigated earlier this year. This has brought sickness back almost to average, although it did not allow achievement of the annual sickness target.
- 2.7 The increases that were previously reported in Neighbourhood Services improved in the latter part of the year, however overall the service saw a 5.6% increase on the same period last year. The Committee resolved at its last meeting that this report should also identify the reasons for sickness absence in Neighbourhood and Environmental Services. Examination of the sickness shows that although absence is above average in all categories there is a significant issue with longer term absence. The highest absences occur in the categories of muscular skeletal, stomach and digestion, stress and depression and back problems. The service have reported previously that they are dealing with this using the council's procedures and a reduction in absence of 21-60 days has now been seen in the first month of the year. Sickness will need to continue to be monitored to ensure this reduction is maintained.
- 2.8 For 2011/12 the council has set an annual target of 9.00days. The actual to end of April is 0.75 days which is on track to achieve the annual target. Individual service targets have not yet been set.

3 OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 The Committee are asked to consider the action being taken and determine whether this gives sufficient assurance that the risk has been reduced.

4. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)

- 4.1 Sickness absence is costly to the council in terms of lost productivity and in some cases providing cover.

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS (STATUTORY, ENVIRONMENTAL, DIVERSITY, SECTION 17 - CRIME AND DISORDER, RISK AND OTHER)

- 5.1 The council needs to ensure that it complies with the Disability Discrimination Act when dealing with sickness absence.

6. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION

- 6.1 Staff, Managers and Trade Unions were consulted as part of the reviews and their views were incorporated into the council's action plan..

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 That the Audit Committee determines whether the impact of improvement action provides sufficient assurance that the risk to capacity due to sickness absence has been reduced.

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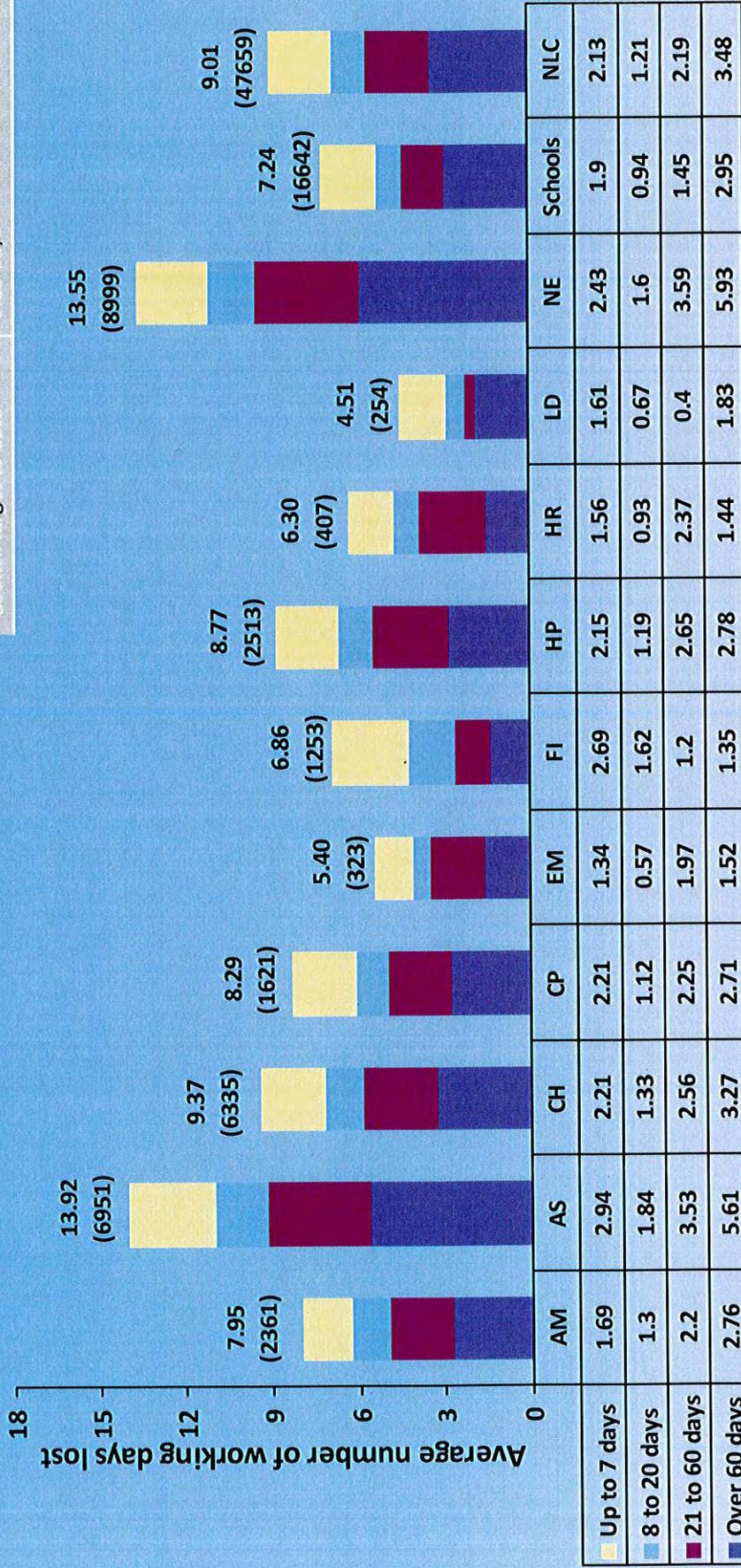
Background Papers used in the preparation of this report

None

Average number of days lost due to sickness absence

April 2010 to March 2011

Reporting period	April 2010 to March 2011
Council actual to date	9.01 days
Council target to date	9.25 days



() – figures in brackets show the total number of FTE days lost

Key & 2010/11 service targets

AM	Asset Management & Culture	8.25	EM	Executive Management	1.25	HP	Highways & Planning	9.25
AS	Adult Social Services	14.60	FI	Strategy Development	2.56	HR	Human Resources	6.03
CH	Children & Young People's Services	8.48	HP	Strategic Regeneration	3.73	LD	Legal & Democratic	4.34
CP	Community Planning & Resources	9.27	FI	Finance	8.26	NE	Neighbourhood & Environment	10.91

Actual and projected sickness absence summary 2010/11

Service	Up to 7 days	8-20 days	21-60 days	Over 60 days	Actual April to Mar	Target year end	Comparison with Same Period Last Year
Asset Management & Culture	1.69	1.30	2.20	2.76	7.95	8.25	-10.5%
Adult Social Services	2.94	1.84	3.53	5.61	13.92	14.60	-22%
Children & Young People's Services ¹	1.97	1.03	1.70	3.02	7.72	8.48	-13%
Children & Young People's Services	2.21	1.33	2.56	3.27	9.37	8.88	+0.4%
Schools	1.90	0.94	1.45	2.95	7.24	8.34	-17.6%
Community Planning & Resources	2.21	1.12	2.25	2.71	8.29	9.27	-24%
Executive Management Team	2.00	0.99	1.26	0.00	4.25	1.25	+54%
Finance	2.69	1.62	1.20	1.35	6.86	8.26	-21.1%
Highways & Planning	2.15	1.19	2.65	2.78	8.77	9.25	-19.39%
Human Resources	1.56	0.93	2.37	1.44	6.30	6.03	-0.79%
Legal & Democratic	1.61	0.67	0.40	1.83	4.51	4.34	-1.3%
Neighbourhood & Environment	2.43	1.60	3.59	5.93	13.55	10.91	+5.6%
Strategy Development	1.02	1.46	0.00	0.00	2.48	3.73	-15.4%
Strategic Regeneration, Housing & Dev't	1.26	0.17	2.81	2.43	6.67	2.56	+147%
North Lincolnshire Council	2.13	1.21	2.19	3.48	9.01	9.25	-12.1%

¹ includes schools & non-schools