



Northern Ireland
**Statistics &
Research**
Agency

**Analysis of
Sickness Absence
in the
NI Departments**

2000/2001



HR *Research &
Evaluation
Branch*

CENTRAL PERSONNEL GROUP
NORTHERN IRELAND CIVIL SERVICE

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Executive Summary

Overall

- During 2000/2001, 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 and was equivalent to more than 1400 full-time staff being out for an entire year. In paybill terms, sickness absence is estimated to have cost in the region of £20.8 million.
- At an overall level, the absence rates are slightly lower than those recorded for last year, namely 6.9% of available working days which was equivalent to 15.3 days per staff year.
- Proportionately fewer staff were absent from work through illness during 2000/2001 than in 1999/2000 (64.8% compared with 67.4%).
- Approximately one in seven staff (14.3%) lost, on a cumulative basis, more than 20 working days over the course of the year. These staff accounted for 77.0% of the total working days lost.
- Almost one in five staff (19.0%) were absent from work on three or more separate occasions during the year, accounting for 42.0% of the total working days lost.
- The largest proportion of absence spells (33.0%) was due to *Viral/ Bacterial Infections* (mainly colds & flu), accounting for 13.2% of the working days lost. The largest proportion of the working days lost, however, (20.4%) was accounted for by *Psychiatric/ Psychological illnesses* which lasted almost 40 working days (8 weeks) on average.
- Almost 80% 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 4.4% (9.7 days per staff year) in OFMDFM to 8.4% (18.6 days per staff year) in DSD.
- The absence rate was highest among staff analogous to Administrative Officer level who lost one in ten (10.0%) of their available working days. This was equivalent to 22.2 days per staff year.
- The absence rate among females was over twice that of males (9.2% versus 4.5%).
- While absent most frequently, staff in the 16-24 age category had the lowest overall absence rate (4.9%). Staff in the 25-34 age category had the highest overall absence rate, losing 7.5% of their available working days.

Long-term Absence

- Some 64% of the total working days lost during 2000/2001 were attributable to long-term absences. A total of 2,804 staff (11.2%) had at least one spell of long-term absence during the year.
- *Psychiatric/ Psychological illnesses* accounted for some 28.4% of the total working days lost as a result of long-term absences.

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 2000/2001 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 2000/2001, 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 2000/2001 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 £20.8 million. At an overall level the figures are slightly lower than those recorded for the previous financial year, namely, 6.9% of available working days (15.3 days per staff year).

To put the results in perspective, the total working days lost due to sickness absence during 2000/2001 was equivalent to more than 1400 full-time staff being out for an entire year.

As highlighted in Figure 1, almost four fifths (79.5%) 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 (20.5%) 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

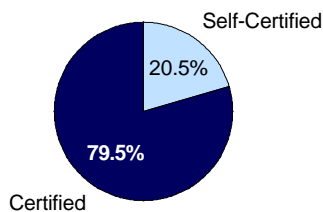
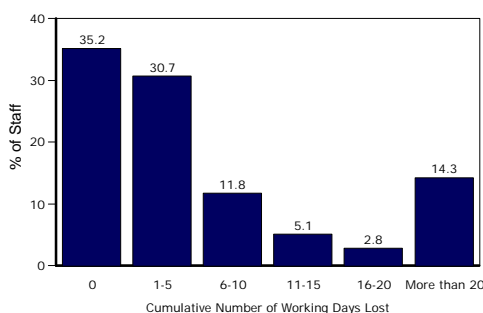


Figure 2

Distribution of Working Days Lost



1.3 Distribution of Working Days Lost

Compared with the previous financial year, proportionately fewer staff were absent from work through illness during 2000/2001 (64.8% in 2000/2001 versus 67.4% in 1999/2000).

An analysis of the cumulative number of working days lost during 2000/2001 revealed that approximately one in seven staff (14.3%) lost more than 20 working days over the course of the year, accounting for 77.0% of the total working days lost. By way of contrast, only 6.8% of the total working days lost during 2000/2001 were attributable to the 30.7% 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 in this category accounted for 64% of the working days lost.

1.4 Department

Departmental absence rates ranged from 8.4% in DSD to 4.4% in OFMDFM during 2000/2001. As shown in Table 1 of Appendix 2, the absence rate in DSD was equivalent to a loss of 18.6 days per staff year, whereas the rate in OFMDFM amounted to 9.7 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.

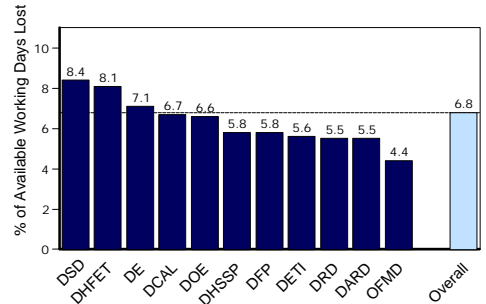
1.5 Grade Level

The absence rate was highest among staff analogous to Administrative Officer level, who lost one in ten (10.0%) 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 22.2 days per staff year.

At EOII level and above, the absence rate decreased at each successive grade up to Grade 7 level, where one in every forty (2.5%) available working days was lost. However, as highlighted in Figure 4 and Table 2 of Appendix 2, staff at Grade 5 and above had the lowest overall absence rate, losing 2.2% of their available working days (4.7 days per staff year on average).

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.

Figure 4

Absence Rates by Grade Level

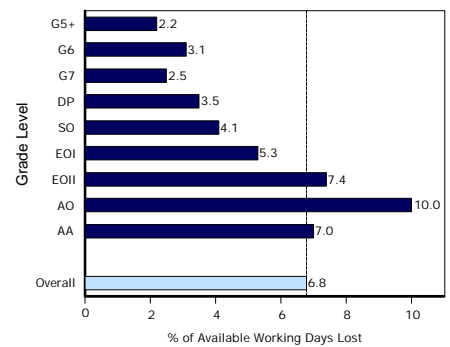
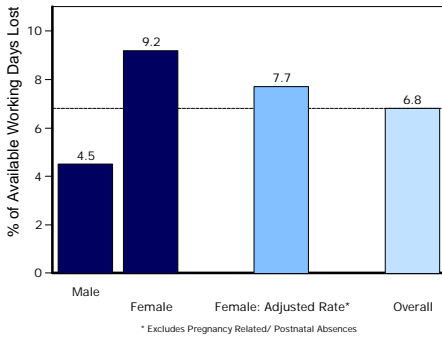


Figure 5

Absence Rates by Gender



1.6 Gender

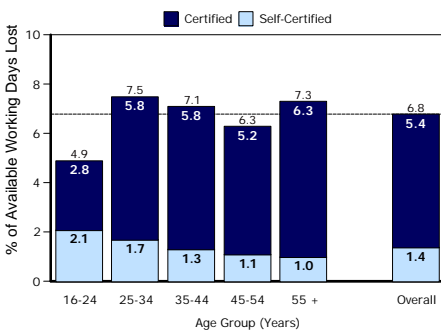
During 2000/2001, the absence rate among females was over twice that of males (9.2% versus 4.5%).

As highlighted in Table 3 of Chapter 3, almost 18% 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 7.7%, 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 20.5 days per staff year on average. This compares with a figure of 9.9 days for males. When Pregnancy Related/ Postnatal absences were excluded, the figure for females reduced to 17.1 days per staff year.

Figure 6

Absence Rates by Age Group



1.7 Age Group

There was noticeable variation in the overall absence rates of staff in the various age groups, ranging from a low of 4.9% among those aged 16-24 to a high of 7.5% among those aged 25-34.

At 2.1%, the self-certified absence rate, which decreased with age, was highest among those aged 16-24. Certified absence rates on the other hand ranged from a low of 2.8% among staff in this age category to a high of 6.3% among those aged 55 and over.

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 2000/2001 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 7, just over 35% of staff had no recorded spells of sickness absence during 2000/2001. Roughly one in four staff (26.8%) had one recorded absence, whereas approximately one in five (19.0%) were absent on two separate occasions during the year. The remainder of staff (19.0%) 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 2000/2001.

2.3 Duration of Absence Spells

Although the vast majority (78.3%) of absence spells during 2000/2001 were short-term, lasting for five working days or less, just over one fifth (20.6%) of the total working days lost were accounted for by such absences. Some 64% of the total working days lost were attributable to long-term absences (i.e. those lasting for more than 20 working days).

Approximately one in eleven (9.3%) spells of absence fell into this category (See Figures 8 and 9).

Figure 7

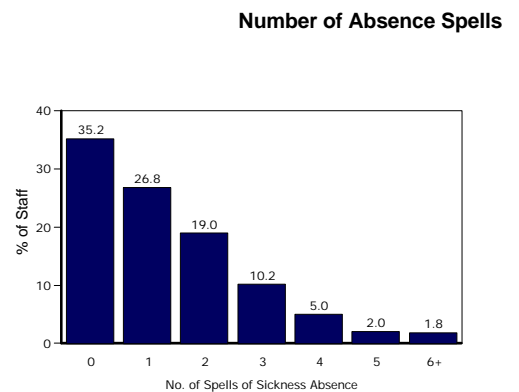


Figure 8

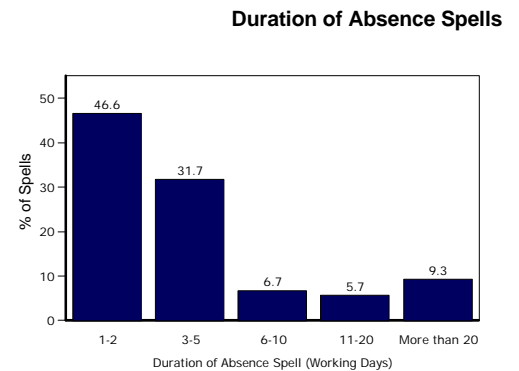


Figure 9

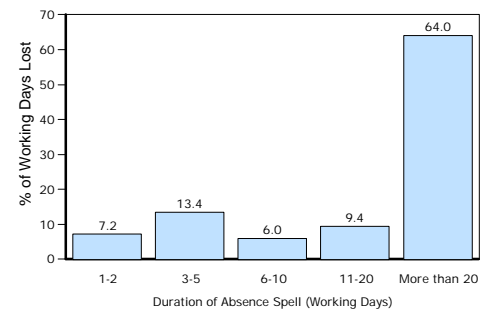
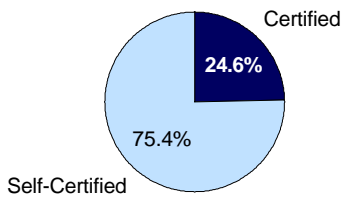


Figure 10

Proportion of Absence Spells by Certification

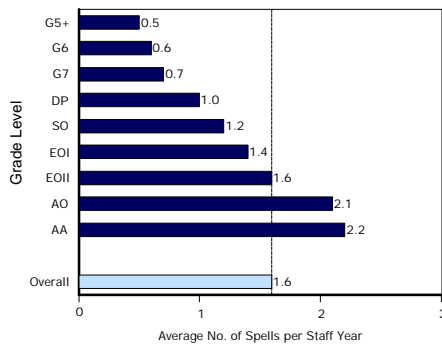


2.4 Self-Certified/ Certified Spells

Approximately three out of every four (75.4%) spells of sickness absence were self-certified. The remainder (24.6%) were covered by a medical certificate. 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. On average, self-certified absences lasted 2.5 working days whereas certified absences lasted almost 30 working days.

Figure 11

Absence Spells by Grade Level



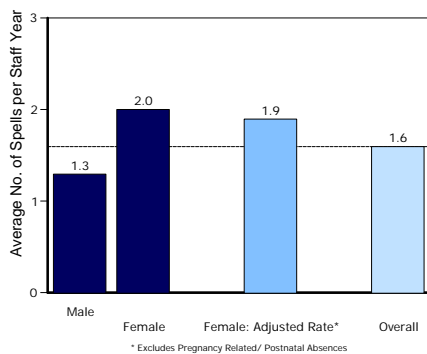
2.5 Grade Level

As shown in Figure 11, 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 2000/2001, with an average of 2.2 and 2.1 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 10.0% of their available working days whereas AAs lost 7.0%).

At each grade level self-certified absences lasted, on average, between 2 and 3 working days. However, the average duration of certified absences ranged from a low of 27 working days at EOI level, to a high of just over 36 working days at Grade 6 level (See Table 5 in Appendix 2).

Figure 12

Absence Spells by Gender



2.6 Gender

Females were absent more frequently than males during 2000/2001 (2.0 spells per staff year on average, compared with 1.3 for males). The exclusion of Pregnancy Related/ Postnatal absences, which were experienced by 6.9% (891) 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 six out of every ten females and three out of every ten males had a certified spell of absence during 2000/2001. On average, these spells lasted for approximately 31 and 27 working days respectively (See Table 6 of Appendix 2).

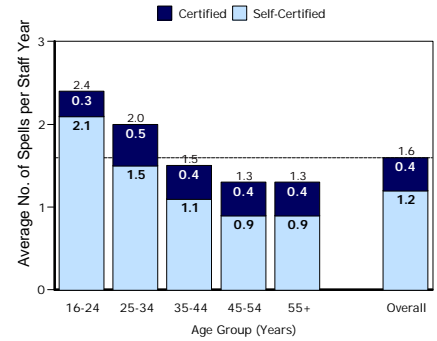
2.7 Age Group

In general, the average number of spells of sickness absence decreased with age, with staff in the 16-24 age group being absent most frequently (2.4 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 4.9% of their available working days.

As shown in Table 7 of Appendix 2, the average duration of certified absences was lowest among those aged 16-24 (approximately 18 working days), and highest among those aged 55 and over (approximately 34 working days).

Figure 13

Absence Spells by Age Group

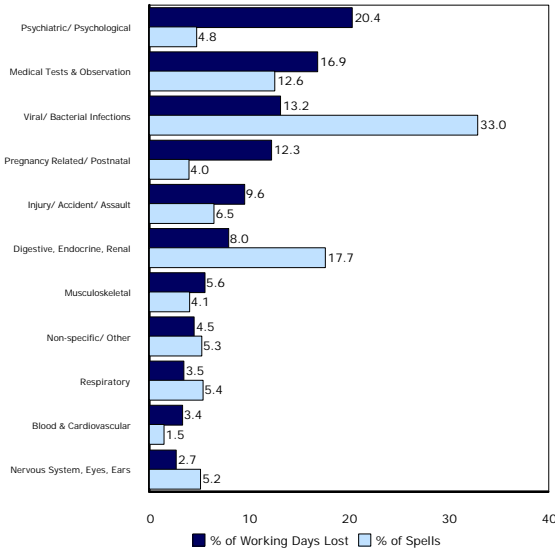


Chapter 3
Reasons for Sickness Absence

3. Reasons for Sickness Absence

Figure 14

Overall Reasons for Absence



3.1 Overall

During the 2000/2001 financial year, almost one third (33.0%) 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 13.2% of the working days that were lost throughout the year. A further 8.0% 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 (17.7%).

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 one fifth (20.4%) of the working days lost over the course of the year. *Medical Tests & Observation* accounted for the second largest proportion of the working days lost (16.9%).

Pregnancy Related/ Postnatal illnesses accounted for 4.0% of absence spells and 12.3% of the working days lost.

Table 1

Average Duration of Absences by Reason

Reason for Absence	Average Duration (Working Days)
Psychiatric/ Psychological	39.6
Pregnancy Related/ Postnatal	28.3
Blood & Cardiovascular	20.3
Injury/ Accident/ Assault	13.6
Musculoskeletal	12.7
Medical Tests & Observation	12.3
Non-specific/ Other	7.8
Respiratory	6.0
Nervous System, Eyes, Ears	4.8
Digestive, Endocrine, Renal	4.2
Viral/ Bacterial Infections	3.7

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 40 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	1.3	0.4	3.5	2.8	4.0	3.0	5.8	4.7	4.4
Medical Tests & Observation	10.5	46.6	22.3	17.4	21.5	24.7	14.2	15.6	14.3
Injury/ Accident/ Assault	7.9	8.6	8.3	12.9	7.9	9.6	9.5	8.7	12.0
Viral/ Bacterial Infections	15.8	11.5	17.5	19.7	16.4	12.4	12.6	11.5	15.6
Psychiatric/ Psychological	44.3	16.6	19.8	15.9	15.0	19.2	20.7	22.4	18.7
Pregnancy Related/ Postnatal	4.0	2.9	7.6	7.4	6.8	8.5	14.2	14.9	10.1
Nervous System, Eyes, Ears	0.0	0.2	1.4	2.0	3.0	2.7	1.8	3.5	2.0
Digestive, Endocrine, Renal	1.9	5.4	5.4	6.6	11.8	6.9	7.4	7.3	10.2
Respiratory	1.9	2.0	3.5	3.2	3.9	3.4	3.6	3.4	4.0
Blood & Cardiovascular	10.3	3.8	6.6	4.5	5.3	3.4	4.1	3.0	2.3
Musculoskeletal	2.1	1.9	4.3	7.7	4.6	6.1	6.2	5.0	6.4
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 G5 level & above (44.3%), EOII level (20.7%), AO level (22.4%) and AA level (18.7%).

Medical Tests & Observation accounted for the largest proportion of the working days lost at both G6 and G7 level (46.6% and 22.3% respectively), and also at SO and EOI level (21.5% and 24.7% respectively).

At DP level, the largest proportion of the working days lost (almost one fifth - 19.7%) was attributable to *Viral/ Bacterial Infections*.

Table 3

Reasons for Absence by Gender

Reason for Absence	% of Working Days Lost	
	Male	Female
Non-specific/ Other	5.7	4.4
Medical Tests & Observation	19.7	15.5
Injury/ Accident/ Assault	11.1	8.8
Viral/ Bacterial Infections	17.0	11.3
Psychiatric/ Psychological	20.5	20.4
Pregnancy Related/ Postnatal	0.0	17.8
Nervous System, Eyes, Ears	2.8	2.7
Digestive, Endocrine, Renal	8.5	7.7
Respiratory	4.4	3.1
Blood & Cardiovascular	4.4	2.9
Musculoskeletal	5.9	5.4
Total	100	100

3.3 Gender

Table 3 shows that *Psychiatric/ Psychological illnesses* accounted for one fifth (20.5%) of the total working days lost among males. *Medical Tests & Observation* accounted for a further fifth (19.7%), and *Viral/ Bacterial Infections* for 17.0%.

Among females, *Psychiatric/ Psychological illnesses* also accounted for one fifth (20.4%) of the total working days lost. *Pregnancy Related/ Postnatal illnesses* accounted for the second largest proportion of the working days lost among females (17.8%), and *Medical Tests & Observation* the third (15.5%).

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 (25.4%). However, among those in the older age groups (i.e. 45-54 and 55+), longer term absences due to *Medical Tests & Observation* and *Psychiatric/ Psychological illnesses* were more common, each accounting for approximately one fifth of the working days lost.

At 23.6%, *Psychiatric/ Psychological illnesses* accounted for the largest proportion of the working days lost among those aged 35-44. Among those aged 25-34, *Pregnancy Related/ Postnatal* illnesses accounted for the largest proportion of the working days lost (21.4%), closely followed by *Psychiatric/ Psychological illnesses* (18.3%).

3.5 Certification

Viral/ Bacterial Infections (mainly colds and flu) accounted for two fifths (40.8%) of the working days lost through self-certified absences. A further one in every six of the working days lost (16.1%) through self-certified absences were associated with *Digestive, Endocrine & Renal illnesses*, and approximately one in every seven (14.1%) with *Medical Tests & Observation*.

Psychiatric/ Psychological illnesses accounted for the largest proportion of the working days lost through certified absences (25.3%), followed by *Medical Tests & Observation* (17.6%). A further 15.0% of the working days lost through certified absences were due to *Pregnancy Related/ Postnatal illnesses*.

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	6.7	4.4	4.0	4.7	4.6
Medical Tests & Observation	11.9	13.0	16.5	22.3	22.4
Injury/ Accident/ Assault	8.4	10.1	8.8	9.7	11.6
Viral/ Bacterial Infections	25.4	13.5	12.1	11.9	10.1
Psychiatric/ Psychological	10.5	18.3	23.6	20.7	21.1
Pregnancy Related/ Postnatal	10.9	21.4	12.8	3.6	1.3
Nervous System, Eyes, Ears	2.6	2.8	2.4	3.4	2.4
Digestive, Endocrine, Renal	14.0	7.6	7.9	7.1	6.9
Respiratory	5.5	3.4	3.1	3.7	4.5
Blood & Cardiovascular	0.9	1.2	3.2	6.2	7.3
Musculoskeletal	3.1	4.4	5.7	6.9	7.8
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	4.4	4.5
Medical Tests & Observation	14.1	17.6
Injury/ Accident/ Assault	5.7	10.6
Viral/ Bacterial Infections	40.8	6.0
Psychiatric/ Psychological	1.8	25.3
Pregnancy Related/ Postnatal	1.8	15.0
Nervous System, Eyes, Ears	4.5	2.3
Digestive, Endocrine, Renal	16.1	5.8
Respiratory	6.1	2.9
Blood & Cardiovascular	1.1	4.0
Musculoskeletal	3.6	6.1
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 2000/2001 financial year.

4.1 Analysis by Month during 2000/2001

As might be expected, there was noticeable variation in the onset of both certified and self-certified absences. For both categories however, the incidence was noticeably higher in the months of October, November and January and, as with last year, was lowest in July.

The proportion of self-certified absences which commenced in December was noticeably lower than in the previous year (8.3% versus 12.9%). Although not as marked, this was also the case for certified absences (6.9% of certified spells in 2000/2001 commenced in December compared with 8.6% in 1999/2000).

4.2 Analysis by Weekday during 2000/2001

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. Almost 12% of certified absences and just over 11% of self-certified absences started on a Friday.

Figure 15

Onset of Absence by Month during 2000/2001

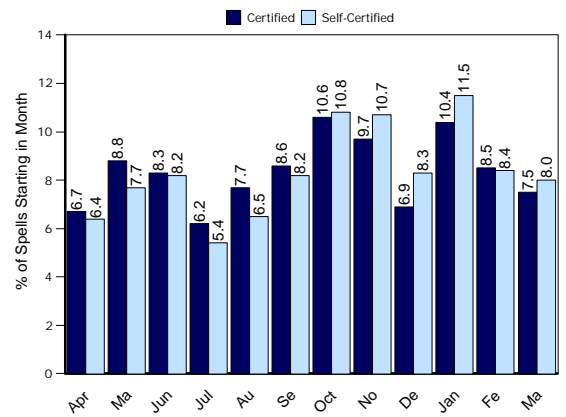
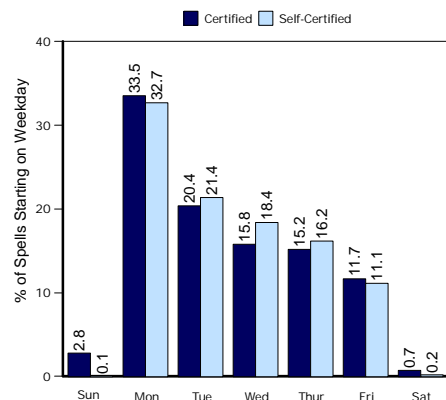


Figure 16

Onset of Absence by Weekday during 2000/2001



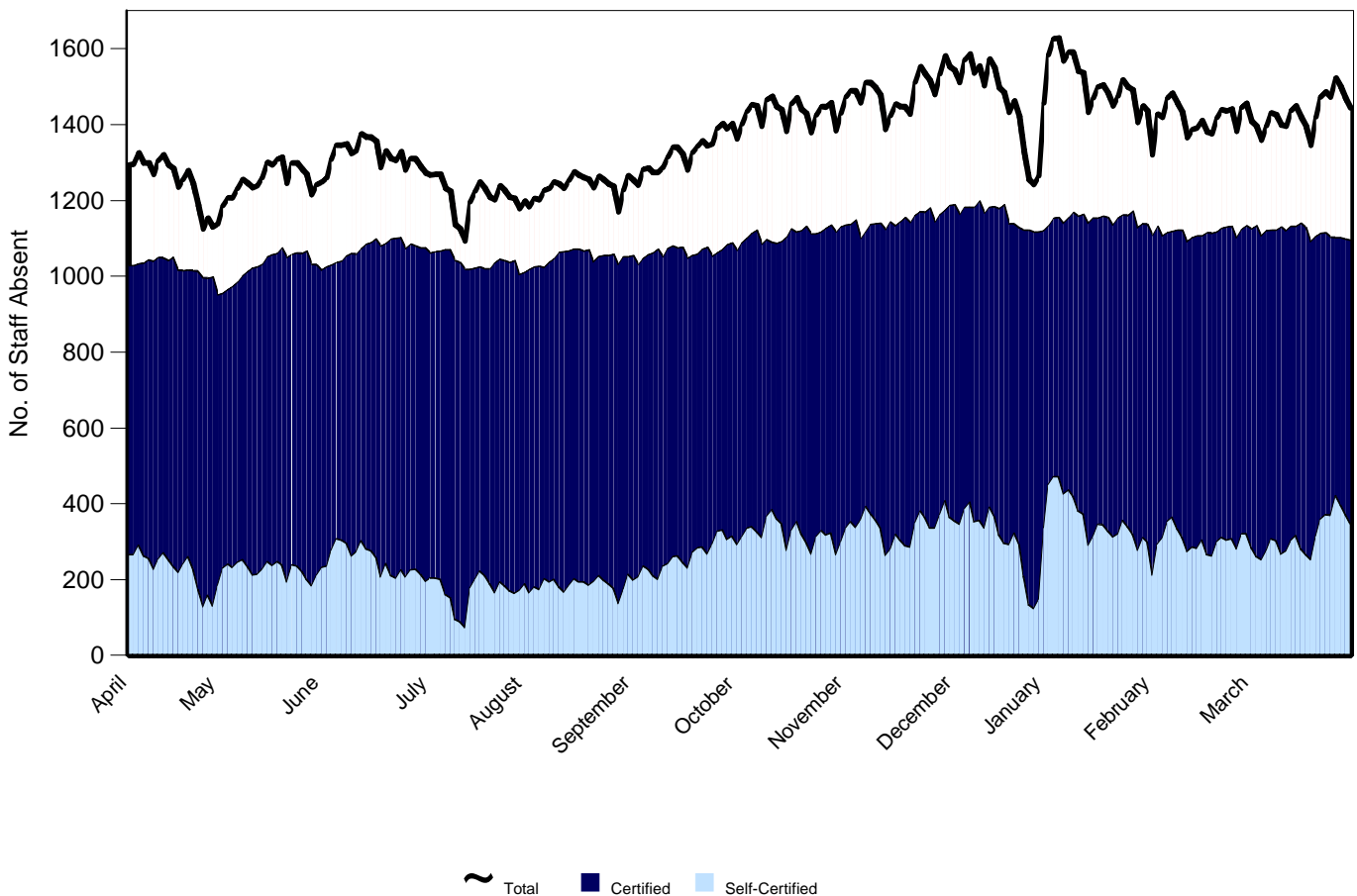
4.3 Number of Staff Absent during 2000/2001

Figure 17 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 1,094 on Friday 14th July 2000 (i.e. immediately following the 12th and 13th of July statutory holidays), to a high of 1,629 on Friday 5th January 2001.

As with last year, the fluctuation in the total number of absentees throughout the year 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 1090 on a daily basis.

Figure 17

Number of Staff Absent on Each Day during 2000/2001



Chapter 5
Long-term Sickness Absence

5. Long-term Sickness Absence

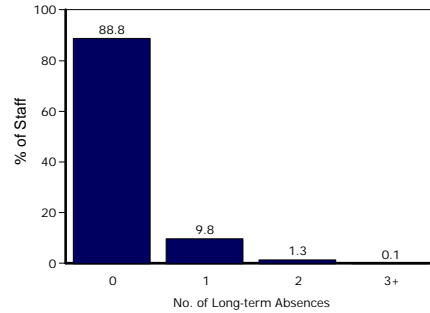
In this chapter we turn our attention to long-term absences which, by definition, are those which lasted more than 20 working days.

5.1 Prevalence of Long-term Absence

A total of 2,804 staff (11.2%) in the NI Departments had one or more spells of long-term absence during the 2000/2001 financial year, resulting in a loss of almost 205,000 available working days. This was equivalent to losing the labour of more than 900 full-time staff for the entire year and, as already highlighted in Chapter 2, accounted for 64% 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 £12.7m.

Figure 18

Analysis of the Number of Long-term Absence Spells



Number of Long-term Absences	Number of Staff	Percentage of Staff
0	22,122	88.8
1	2,441	9.8
2	316	1.3
3+	47	0.2
Total	24,926	100

5.2 Reason for Absence

Psychiatric/ Psychological illnesses accounted for some 28.4% of the total working days lost during 2000/2001 as a result of long-term absences. Medical Tests & Observation accounted for a further 18.3% and Pregnancy Related/ Postnatal illness for 16.0%. Approximately one in every ten (10.4%) of the working days lost through long-term absences was recorded under the Injury/Accident/Assault category.

Figure 19

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

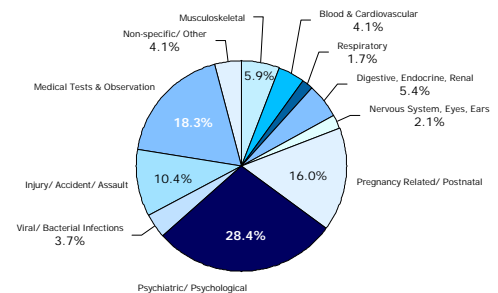
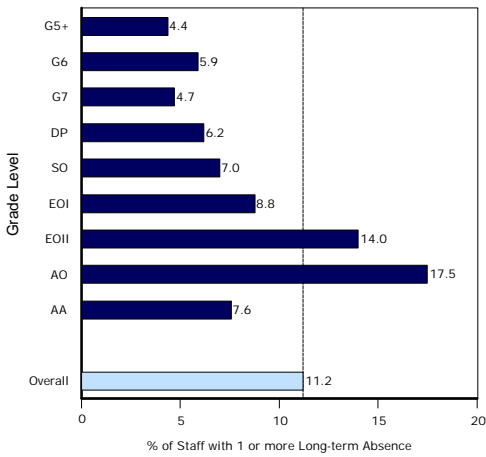


Figure 20

Long-term Spells by Grade Level

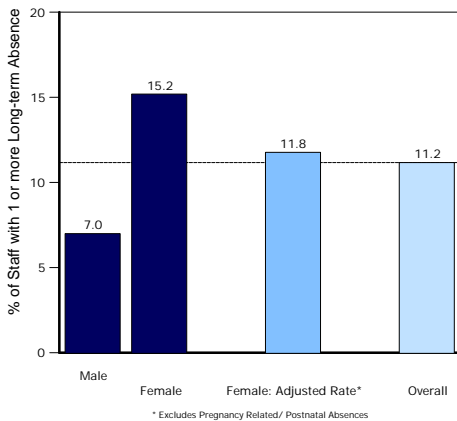


5.3 Grade Level

Figure 20 shows that, as with last year, the incidence of long-term absence was highest among staff at AO level. As highlighted in Table 1 of Appendix 4, over two thirds (67.6%) of the total working days lost at this level were attributable to those staff (17.5%) 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 12.8 working weeks. The incidence was also high at EOII level with 14.0% of staff having one or more spells of long-term absence. Again, two thirds (66.6%) of the total working days lost at this level can be accounted for by such absences, which lasted 12.6 working weeks on average.

Figure 21

Long-term Spells by Gender



5.4 Gender

A higher proportion of females (15.2%) than males (7.0%) 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 11.8% (See Figure 21).

The average durations of long-term absence among males and females were very similar (12.6 and 12.7 working weeks respectively). That said, a noticeably higher proportion of the total working days lost among females was attributable to long-term absence (67.5% among females versus 56.9% among males) - see Table 2 of Appendix 4.

5.5 Age Group

Figure 22 shows that the incidence of long-term absence was lowest in the 16-24 age group, with 4.6% of staff having one or more spells of long-term absence during 2000/2001. On average, these absences lasted just over 9 working weeks and accounted for just under 36% of the total working days lost among staff in this age category.

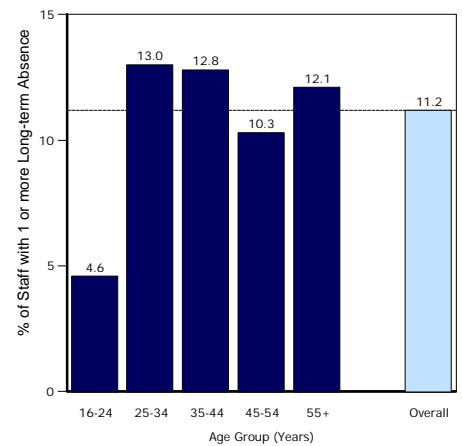
Staff in the 25-34 age group were most likely to be absent on a long-term basis, with 13.0% having one or more spells of long-term absence. By way of contrast, almost 61% of the total working days lost among staff in this age category were attributable to long-term absences, which lasted almost 12 working weeks on average.

Over 73% of total working days lost among those aged 55 and over were attributable to long-term absences. Approximately one in eight staff (12.1%) in this group had one or more spells of long-term absence during the year, lasting almost 14 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 22

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:-

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

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

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

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

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

APPENDIX 2
Tables Relating to Chapters 1 & 2

Appendix 2

Tables relating to Chapter 1

Table 1

Department	No. of Working Days Lost per Staff Year		
	Self-Certified	Certified	Total
DSD	3.1	15.5	18.6
DHFETE	4.4	13.6	17.9
DE	3.3	12.4	15.7
DCAL	4.1	10.6	14.7
DOE	3.3	11.3	14.6
DHSSPS	3.3	9.6	12.9
DFP	3.0	9.8	12.8
DETI	3.4	9.0	12.4
DRD	2.8	9.4	12.2
DARD	2.5	9.7	12.2
OFMDFM	2.6	7.1	9.7
Overall	3.1	12.0	15.1

Table 2

Grade Level	No. of Working Days Lost per Staff Year		
	Self-Certified	Certified	Total
G5+	0.8	4.0	4.7
G6	1.2	5.6	6.7
G7	1.4	4.1	5.5
DP	1.7	5.9	7.6
SO	2.2	6.7	8.9
EOI	2.8	8.8	11.6
EOII	3.1	13.3	16.3
AO	3.8	18.4	22.2
AA	4.1	11.5	15.6
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	7.2	9.9
Female	3.5	16.9	20.5
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	4.7	6.2	10.9
25-34	3.7	13.0	16.7
35-44	2.9	12.9	15.7
45-54	2.4	11.3	13.7
55+	2.2	13.8	16.0
Overall	3.1	12.0	15.1

Appendix 2

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+	0.3	2.4	0.1	28.9	0.5	10.4
G6	0.5	2.4	0.2	36.2	0.6	10.7
G7	0.6	2.4	0.2	28.0	0.7	7.6
DP	0.7	2.3	0.2	28.1	1.0	8.0
SO	0.9	2.4	0.3	27.2	1.2	7.6
EOI	1.1	2.6	0.3	27.0	1.4	8.4
EOII	1.2	2.6	0.4	31.8	1.6	10.2
AO	1.5	2.6	0.6	31.3	2.1	10.8
AA	1.8	2.3	0.4	27.1	2.2	7.1
Overall	1.2	2.5	0.4	29.8	1.6	9.2

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	1.1	2.6	0.3	27.4	1.3	7.6
Female	1.4	2.5	0.6	30.9	2.0	10.4
Overall	1.2	2.5	0.4	29.8	1.6	9.2

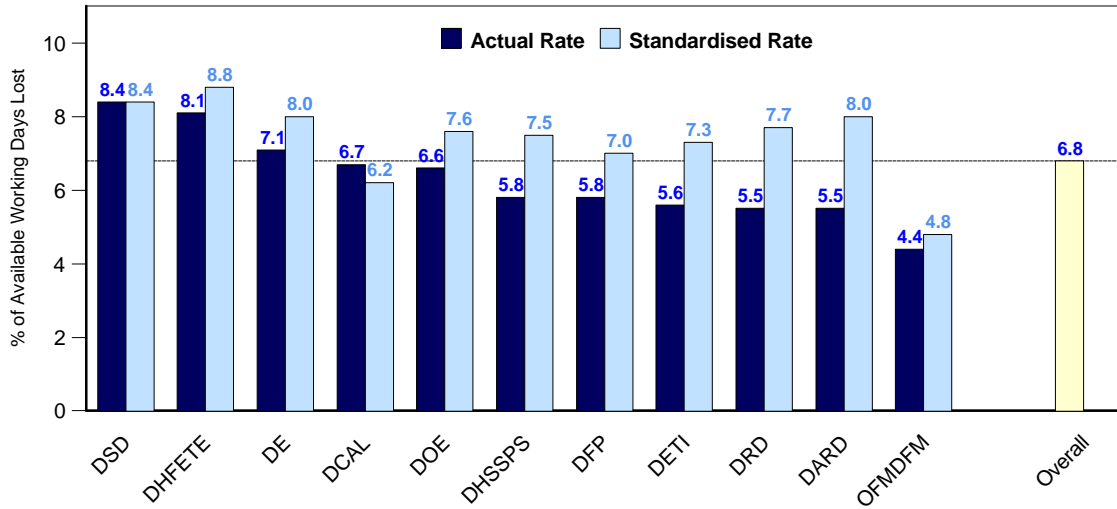
Table 7

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	2.2	0.3	18.2	2.5	4.5
25-34	1.5	2.6	0.5	27.8	1.9	8.7
35-44	1.1	2.5	0.4	31.3	1.6	10.2
45-54	0.9	2.6	0.4	32.5	1.3	10.7
55+	0.9	2.6	0.4	34.3	1.3	12.8
Overall	1.2	2.5	0.4	29.8	1.6	9.2

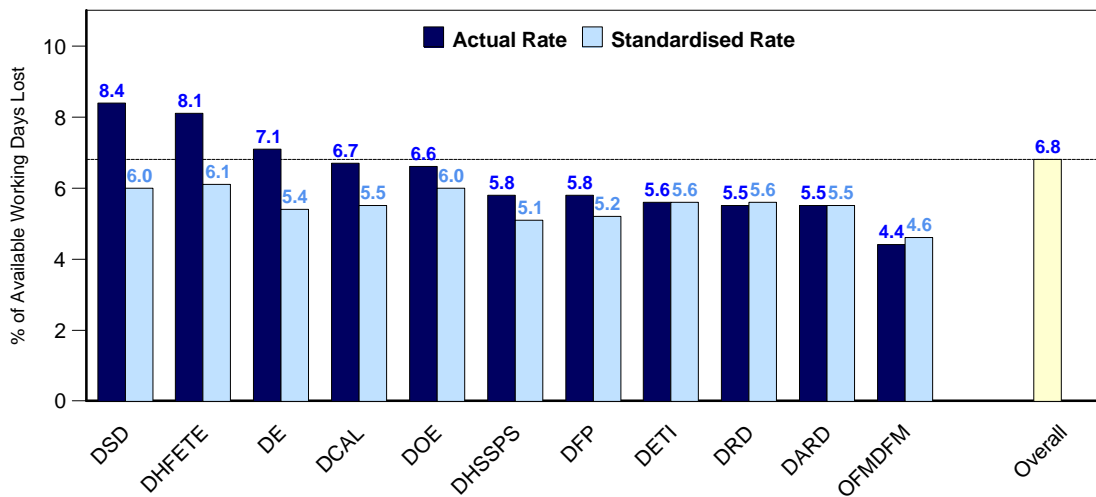
APPENDIX 3
Illustrative Standardised Departmental Absence Rates

Appendix 3

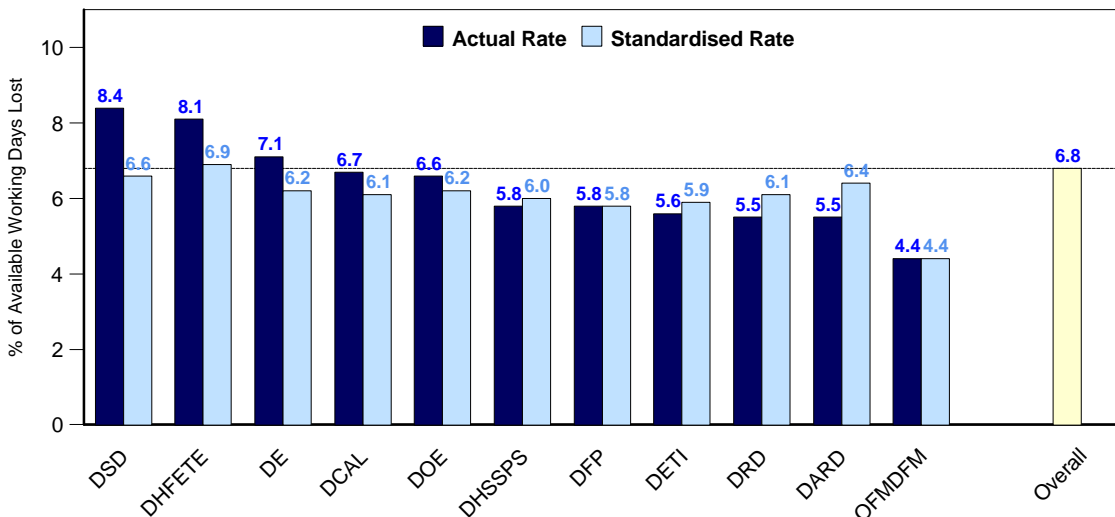
Example 1: Departmental Absence Rates: Standardised to DSD Organisation Structure



Example 2: Departmental Absence Rates: Standardised to DARD Organisation Structure



Example 3: Departmental Absence Rates: Standardised to DFP Organisation Structure



APPENDIX 4
Tables Relating to Chapter 5

Appendix 4

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+	4.7	12.6	63.0
G6	7.7	12.2	69.6
G7	5.4	12.2	60.3
DP	7.7	11.9	60.5
SO	8.2	12.4	57.6
EOI	11.3	12.2	59.8
EOII	17.3	12.6	66.6
AO	23.4	12.8	67.6
AA	13.9	13.0	57.9
Overall	15.3	12.7	64.0

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	8.9	12.6	56.9
Female	21.8	12.7	67.5
Overall	15.3	12.7	64.0

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	8.3	9.3	35.7
25-34	17.4	11.7	60.9
35-44	16.5	12.8	67.2
45-54	13.1	14.1	67.8
55+	16.9	13.8	73.3
Overall	15.3	12.7	64.0

APPENDIX 5
Year on Year Comparisons

Appendix 5

Year on Year Comparisons

Table 1

Department	% of Available Working Days Lost		No. of Days Lost per Staff Year	
	1999/2000	2000/2001	1999/2000	2000/2001
DSD	8.3	8.4	18.5	18.6
DHFETE	7.4	8.1	16.5	17.9
DE	6.2	7.1	13.7	15.7
DCAL	5.8	6.7	12.7	14.7
DOE	6.6	6.6	14.6	14.6
DHSSPS	6.4	5.8	14.1	12.9
DFP	5.1	5.8	11.3	12.8
DETI	5.9	5.6	13.2	12.4
DRD	5.2	5.5	11.4	12.2
DARD	6.2	5.5	13.8	12.2
OFMDFM	4.7	4.4	10.4	9.7
Overall	6.9	6.8	15.3	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	1999/2000	2000/2001
G5+	2.2	2.2	4.8	4.7
G6	2.4	3.1	5.3	6.7
G7	2.8	2.5	6.1	5.5
DP	3.9	3.5	8.6	7.6
SO	4.6	4.1	10.0	8.9
EOI	5.2	5.3	11.6	11.6
EOII	7.1	7.4	15.8	16.3
AO	10.1	10.0	22.5	22.2
AA	7.1	7.0	15.9	15.6
Overall	6.9	6.8	15.3	15.1

Table 3

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

Table 4

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

Appendix 5

Year on Year Comparisons

Table 5

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

Table 6

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

Table 7

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

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

Appendix 5

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
G5+	69.7	63.0
G6	51.6	69.6
G7	57.3	60.3
DP	62.1	60.5
SO	59.5	57.6
EOI	56.2	59.8
EOII	62.6	66.6
AO	66.6	67.6
AA	55.2	57.9
Overall	62.0	64.0

Table 9

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

Table 10

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

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