

Analysis of Sickness Absence in the  
NI Departments

2002 / 2003



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## Executive Summary

### Overall

- During 2002/2003, an average of 15.4 days per staff year were lost as a result of sickness absence. This represented 7.0% of available working days.
- These findings show a slight increase over the previous year, when 15.1 days per staff year (6.8% of available working days) were lost as a result of sickness absence.
- In direct paybill costs, sickness absence during 2002/2003 is estimated to have cost in the region of £24.3 million.
- The vast majority of the working days lost (76.9%) were due to a relatively small proportion of staff (15.4%).
- The largest proportion of the working days lost was due to *Psychiatric/Psychological* illnesses (26.1%), which lasted for 36.4 working days (over 7 weeks) on average.
- Almost four-fifths (79.5%) of the total working days lost were covered by a medical certificate.

### Key Variations

- Departmental absence rates ranged from 10.7 days per staff year (4.9%) in DRD, to 19.1 days per staff year (8.6%) in DSD. Differences in absence rates across Departments were influenced in large measure by differences in their grade and gender profiles.
- The absence rate was highest among staff analogous to Administrative Officer level, who lost 21.6 days per staff year. This was equivalent to approximately one in ten (9.7%) of their available working days.
- The absence rate among females (20.0 days per staff year) was considerably higher than that of males (10.7 days per staff year).

### Long-term Absence

- Some 64% of the total working days lost during 2002/2003 were attributable to long-term absences, with a total of 3,287 staff (12.2%) having at least one spell of long-term absence during the year.
- *Psychiatric/Psychological* illnesses accounted for some 35.6% 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 a comprehensive analysis of sickness absence statistics for non-industrial staff (including casuals) in the NI Departments during the 2002/2003 financial year. It also contains an analysis of trends to help Departments and Agencies assess the effectiveness of their efforts to reduce absenteeism.

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 differ in their proportions of part-time staff and/or their levels of staff turnover. In particular, 'number of days lost per person' can give a quite misleading picture for organizations with high proportions of part-time staff.

To address this issue the Cabinet Office recommend that absence 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 the report in terms of the percentage of available working days lost and working days lost per staff year. For the majority of people, a staff year amounted to 223 working days during 2002/2003, but clearly this depends on date of entry and/or date of leaving, and annual leave entitlement which varies by grade, length of service, and work pattern. For each individual a 'staff year' was therefore calculated taking all of these factors into account. Definitions of the various absence measurements used throughout the report can be found in Appendix 1.

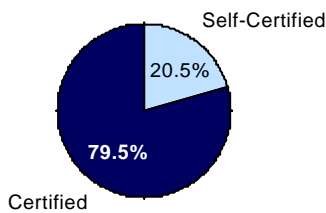
The reader should note that 'Days per Staff Year' will be referred to as 'Days' throughout the report

## 1.2 Overall Absence Levels

Across the eleven NI Departments, an average of 15.4 days were lost among non-industrial staff as a result of sickness absence during the 2002/2003 financial year. This represents 7.0% of available working days and, in paybill terms, is estimated to have cost in the region of £24.3 million. The level of absence is slightly higher than that recorded for the previous financial year, namely 15.1 days per staff year (6.8% of available working days).

**Figure 1**

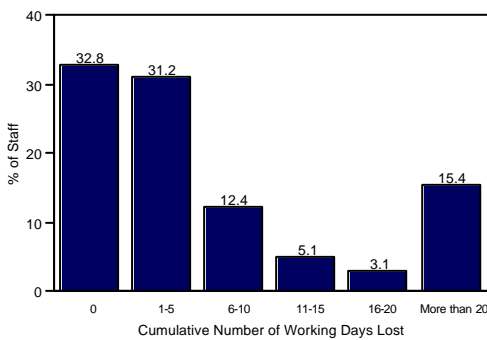
**Proportion of Working Days Lost by Certification**



As illustrated 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 12.3 days per staff year (5.5% of available working days). 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 3.2 days per staff year (1.4% of available working days).

**Figure 2**

**Distribution of Working Days Lost**



## 1.3 Distribution of Working Days Lost

During 2002/2003, 67.2% of staff were absent on at least one occasion. This proportion was higher than the previous financial year (64.9%).

An analysis of the cumulative number of working days lost revealed that 15.4% of staff lost more than 20 working days over the course of the year, accounting for 76.9% of the total working days lost.

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 individual spells of absence which lasted for more than 20 working days) is presented in Chapter 5. Absences of this type accounted for 64.0% of the working days lost.

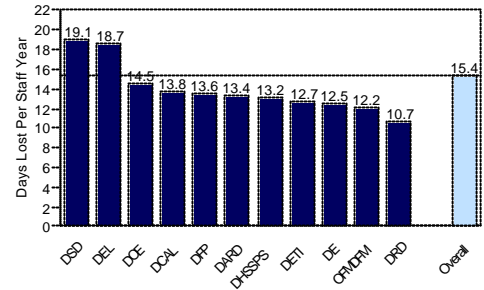
### 1.4 Department

Across the Departments, the level of absence ranged from 19.1 days in DSD, to 10.7 days in DRD. As shown in Table 1 of Appendix 2, the absence rate in DSD was equivalent to a loss of 8.6% of their available working days, whereas the rate in DRD amounted to 4.9% of their available working days.

It is evident from the information presented throughout this report that levels of absenteeism vary considerably by grade, gender and age. As such, the staff profile of a Department will have a major bearing on its overall absence rate. It is important to bear this in mind when making Departmental comparisons. The extent to which a Department's staffing profile can influence its overall absence rate (most notably in the cases of DSD and DEL) is illustrated through standardised rates presented in Appendix 3.

Figure 3

Departmental Absence Levels



Note:

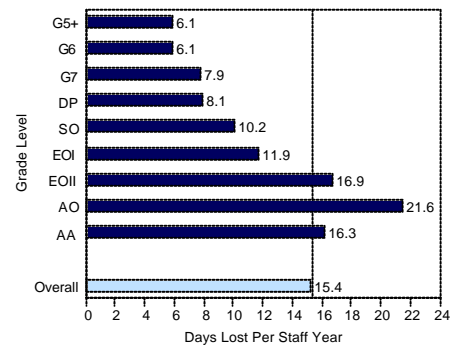
1. Staff from the Parliamentary Commissioner for Complaints and the Planning Appeals Commission are included in the DFP figure.
2. Staff from HSENI and OFREG are included in the DETI figure.

### 1.5 Grade Level

The level of absence was highest amongst staff analogous to Administrative Officer (21.6 days), and decreased at each successive grade level to reach a low of 6.1 days at Grade 6 and above.

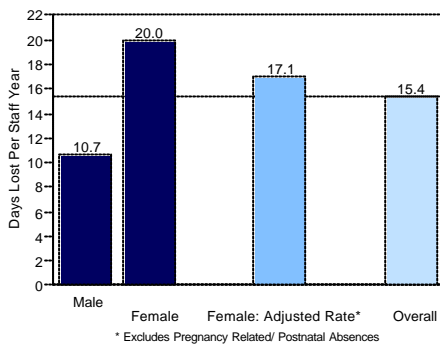
Figure 4

Absence Levels by Grade



**Figure 5**

**Absence Levels by Gender**



**1.6 Gender**

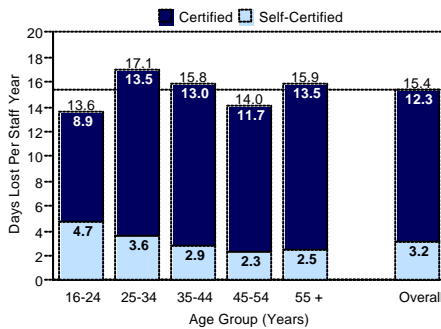
During 2002/2003, the level of absence among females was almost twice that of males (20.0 days versus 10.7 days).

When *Pregnancy Related/Postnatal* absences were removed from the calculations the level of absence among females, while reducing to 17.1 days, remained markedly higher than that of males.

The absence rates associated with these levels of absence are presented in Appendix 2.

**Figure 6**

**Absence Levels by Age Group**



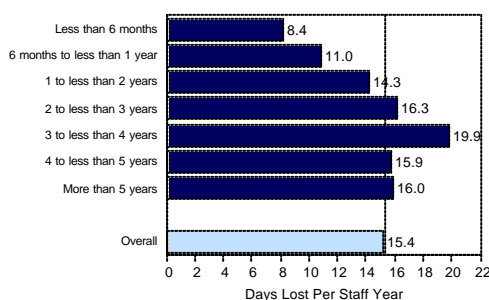
**1.7 Age Group**

The absence level of staff in the various age groups ranged from a low of 13.6 days among those aged 16-24, to a high of 17.1 days among those aged 25-34.

The self-certified absence rate, which generally decreased with age, was highest among those aged 16-24 (4.7 days). Certified absence levels, ranged from a low of 8.9 days among staff in the youngest age category, to a joint high of 13.5 days per staff year among those aged 25-34 and 55 and over.

**Figure 7**

**Absence Levels by Length of Service**



**1.8 Length of Service**

Staff who are still in their probation period (i.e. first years service) have the lowest level of absence. Up to about four years service there is a stepped increase in the level of absence for each additional year of service.

Chapter 2  
Spells of Sickness Absence



## 2. Spells of Sickness Absence

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter considers the number of recorded spells of sickness absence. Supporting information which shows the average duration of both self-certified and certified absence spells can be found in Tables 5 to 7 of Appendix 2.

### 2.2 Number of Absence Spells

As shown in Figure 8, just under one third (32.8%) of staff had no recorded spells of sickness absence, a decrease on the previous financial year (35.1%). A further 28.2% of staff had one recorded absence and approximately one in five (19.3%) were absent on two separate occasions during the year. The remainder of staff (19.7%) were absent from work through illness on three or more occasions.

Overall, non-industrial staff in the NI Departments had an average of 1.7 spells of sickness absence, a slightly higher figure than that found in the previous financial year (1.6 spells per staff year).

### 2.3 Duration of Absence Spells

The vast majority (78.1%) of absence spells were short-term, lasting for five working days or less. These absences accounted for just over one fifth (20.6%) of the total working days lost (Figure 10). 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 64.0% of the total working days lost, a slightly lower figure than that found in the previous financial year (64.7%).

Figure 8

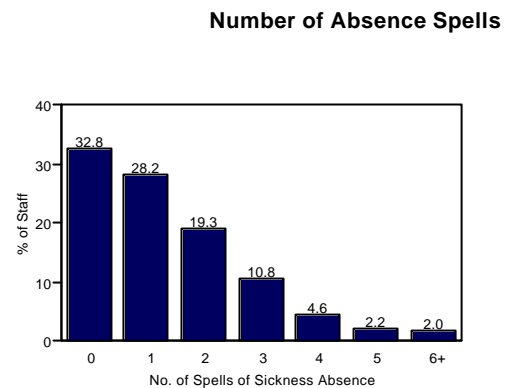


Figure 9

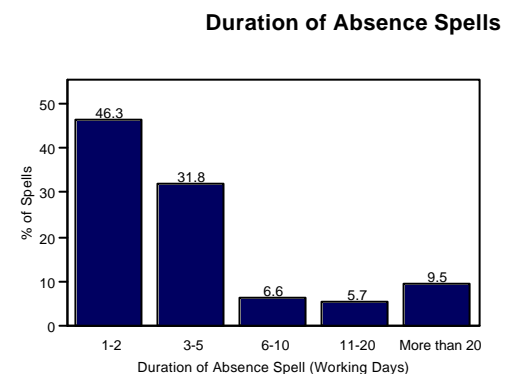


Figure 10

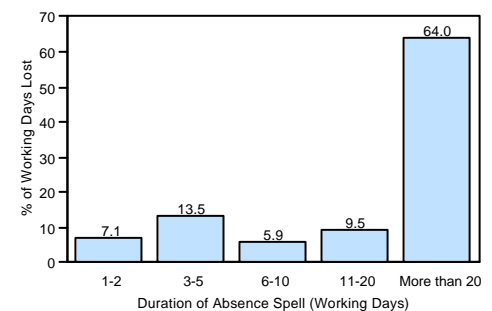


Figure 11

### Proportion of Absence Spells by Certification

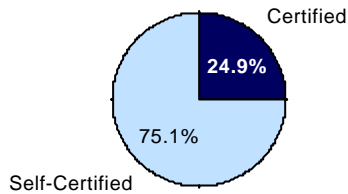


Figure 12

### Absence Spells by Grade Level

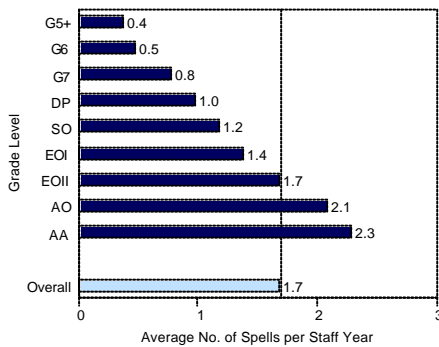
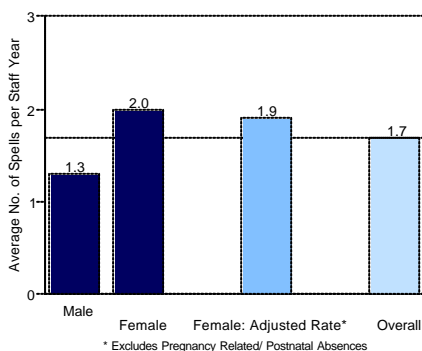


Figure 13

### Absence Spells by Gender



## 2.4 Self-Certified/Certified Spells<sup>1</sup>

Approximately three out of every four (75.1%) spells of sickness absence were self-certified, a similar proportion to that found in the previous financial year (75.3%). The remainder (24.9%) were covered by a medical certificate. On average, self-certified absences lasted 2.5 working days whereas certified absences lasted just under 30 working days.

## 2.5 Grade Level

As shown in Figure 12, the average number of absence spells decreased with each successive grade up to Grade 5 level and above. Staff at AA and AO levels were absent most frequently, with an average of 2.3 and 2.1 spells of sickness absence 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 9.7% of their available working days whereas AAs lost 7.3%).

The duration of self-certified absences ranged from 2.1 working days at Grade 6 level to 2.7 working days at EOI level. The average duration of certified absences however, ranged from a joint low of just over 27 working days at AA and EOI levels, to a high of almost 58 working days at Grade 5 level and above (See Table 5 in Appendix 2).

## 2.6 Gender

The average number of absence spells for females (2.0) was higher than that for males (1.3). The exclusion of *Pregnancy Related/Postnatal* absences (which involved 6.2% [874] 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.

<sup>1</sup> 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.

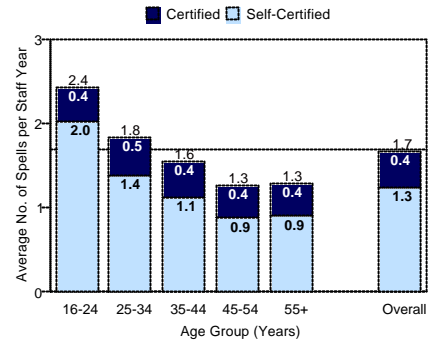


**2.7 Age Group**

The average number of sickness absence spells decreased with age, with staff in the 16-24 age group being absent most frequently (2.4 spells). However, as already highlighted in Figure 6 of Chapter 1, staff in this group had the lowest overall absence rate, losing 13.6 days per staff year on average (6.1% of their available working days).

**Figure 14**

**Absence Spells by Age Group**





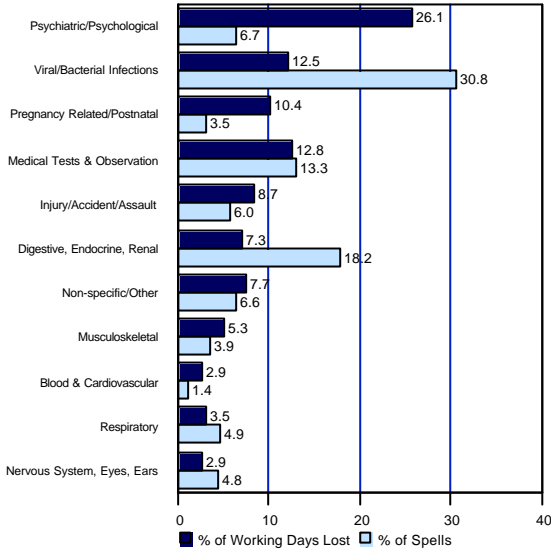
Chapter 3  
Reasons for Sickness Absence



### 3. Reasons for Sickness Absence

Figure 15

Overall Reasons for Absence



#### 3.1 Overall

Illnesses classified as *Psychiatric/Psychological* accounted for more than one quarter (26.1%) of the working days lost, a slightly higher proportion than the previous financial year (24.6%). Absences in this category tended to be long-term, lasting on average 36.4 days.

Over three tenths (30.8%) of absence spells were due to *Viral/Bacterial Infections* (mainly colds and flu). While the majority of these spells were short-term in nature, on a cumulative basis they accounted for the third largest proportion of the working days that were lost throughout the year (12.5%). A further 12.8% of the working days lost were associated with *Medical Tests & Observation*, which are also typically short-term in nature. Absences in this category accounted for the third largest proportion of absence spells (13.3%).

*Pregnancy Related/Postnatal* illnesses accounted for 3.5% of absence spells and 10.4% of the working days lost. This was a decrease from the previous financial year when 12.6% of the working days lost were on these grounds.

An analysis of the reasons for certified and self-certified absences is presented in Appendix 2.

Table 1

Average Duration of Absences by Reason

Reason for Absence	Average Duration (Working Days)
Psychiatric/Psychological	36.4
Pregnancy Related/Postnatal	27.5
Blood & Cardiovascular	18.3
Injury/Accident/Assault	13.5
Musculoskeletal	12.6
Non-specific/Other	10.8
Medical Tests & Observation	8.9
Respiratory	6.6
Nervous System, Eyes, Ears	5.5
Viral/Bacterial Infections	3.8
Digestive, Endocrine, Renal	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 *Digestive, Endocrine, Renal* illnesses and *Viral/Bacterial Infections*, to 36.4 working days (7.3 weeks) for absences resulting from *Psychiatric/Psychological* illnesses.

While the proportion of the total working days lost due to *Psychiatric/Psychological* illnesses (26.1%) has increased from 24.6% in 2001/2002, the average duration has decreased from 37.9 working days to 36.4 working days.

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	1.5	10.0	9.6	6.5	6.7	7.6	8.1	8.2	6.5
Medical Tests & Observation	13.1	30.5	15.3	15.1	13.4	16.0	10.7	10.7	16.9
Injury/Accident/Assault	2.7	6.1	6.5	8.6	9.5	10.5	9.0	8.2	8.3
Viral/Bacterial Infections	8.4	7.2	12.2	15.4	16.0	12.5	12.0	11.0	14.6
Psychiatric/Psychological	59.6	32.7	23.6	25.5	27.8	23.4	26.9	28.3	19.9
Pregnancy Related/Postnatal	0.0	4.1	4.4	8.0	4.8	8.6	12.1	12.2	9.4
Nervous System, Eyes, Ears	5.3	0.6	4.9	3.9	3.2	1.7	2.2	2.9	3.7
Digestive, Endocrine, Renal	0.8	2.2	4.2	5.4	6.2	5.9	6.7	7.4	10.7
Respiratory	7.9	1.0	4.1	3.8	4.6	3.4	3.6	3.4	3.1
Blood & Cardiovascular	0.5	3.3	10.1	5.4	4.4	3.1	2.8	2.2	2.2
Musculoskeletal	0.1	2.3	5.1	2.2	3.4	7.4	5.9	5.4	4.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

## 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.

In six out of the nine grade level categories, the proportion of working days lost due to *Psychiatric/Psychological* illnesses was higher than in the previous financial year. In particular the percentage of days lost by staff at Grade 5 level and above because of *Psychiatric/Psychological* illnesses increased from 33.7% to 59.6%.

Table 3

## Reasons for Absence by Gender

Reason for Absence	% of Working Days Lost	
	Male	Female
Non-specific/Other	6.5	8.3
Medical Tests & Observation	15.2	11.6
Injury/Accident/Assault	10.0	8.0
Viral/Bacterial Infections	16.0	10.6
Psychiatric/Psychological	28.2	25.1
Pregnancy Related/Postnatal	n/a	15.8
Nervous System, Eyes, Ears	3.2	2.7
Digestive, Endocrine, Renal	7.7	7.1
Respiratory	4.2	3.1
Blood & Cardiovascular	4.1	2.2
Musculoskeletal	5.0	5.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

## 3.3 Gender

Table 3 shows that *Psychiatric/Psychological* illnesses accounted for the largest proportion (28.2%) of the total working days lost among males. *Viral/Bacterial Infections* accounted for a further 16.0%, and *Medical Tests & Observation* for 15.2%.

Among females, *Psychiatric/Psychological* illnesses accounted for approximately one quarter (25.1%) of the total working days lost. *Pregnancy Related/Postnatal* illnesses accounted for the second largest proportion of the working days lost among females (15.8%), and *Medical Tests & Observation* the third (11.6%).

The proportion of working days lost due to *Psychiatric/Psychological* illnesses increased for both males and females in 2002/2003 compared with the previous financial year (males: 28.2% compared with 24.6%; females 25.1% compared with 24.5%).

### 3.4 Age Group

During the 2002/2003 financial year

*Psychiatric/Psychological* illnesses accounted for the largest proportion of working days lost among staff in all the age groups. This differs from the previous financial year in which *Psychiatric/Psychological* illnesses accounted for the largest proportion of working days lost among staff in the three oldest age groups (i.e. 35-44, 45-54 and 55+) but *Viral/Bacterial Infections* and *Pregnancy Related/Postnatal* illnesses accounted for the largest proportion of working days lost among staff in the 16-24 and 25-34 age groups respectively.

Table 4

Group	Reasons for Absence by Age				
	% of Working Days Lost				
Reason for Absence	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+
Non-specific/Other	7.3	6.3	7.8	10.1	7.4
Medical Tests & Observation	12.9	10.4	11.9	15.9	16.9
Injury/Accident/Assault	9.5	7.6	9.5	8.7	7.5
Viral/Bacterial Infections	18.0	12.4	11.7	11.5	9.6
Psychiatric/Psychological	21.6	23.8	28.0	29.9	23.8
Pregnancy Related/Postnatal	8.5	20.5	10.5	1.3	0.0
Nervous System, Eyes, Ears	2.4	2.7	2.7	2.0	7.1
Digestive, Endocrine, Renal	12.6	7.6	6.2	5.3	7.5
Respiratory	3.7	3.1	3.1	3.7	5.7
Blood & Cardiovascular	0.9	1.1	2.8	4.4	8.5
Musculoskeletal	2.7	4.5	5.8	7.0	5.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>





Chapter 4  
Onset of Sickness Absence



## 4. Onset of Sickness Absence

This chapter examines seasonal effects in the onset of sickness absence during the financial year 2002/2003.

### 4.1 Analysis by Month during 2002/2003

As might be expected, there was substantial seasonal variation in the onset of both certified and self-certified absences. For both categories, the onset of absences was highest in the months of September, October, November and January. However, the level of seasonal variation was much greater for self-certified than for medically certified spells of absence. For example, the onset of self-certified absence for the months October, November and January were more than one and a half times that recorded during the period June - August.

Figure 16

Onset of Absence by Month during 2002/2003

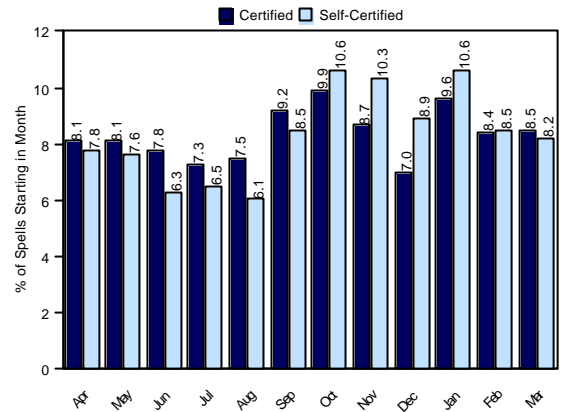


Figure 17

Onset of Psychiatric/Psychological Absence by Month during 2002/2003

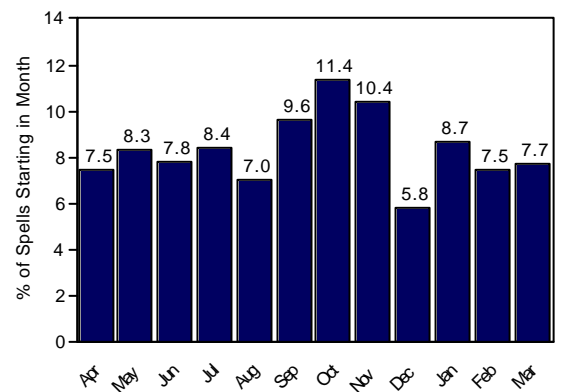


Figure 17 shows the variation in the onset of absence due to *Psychiatric/Psychological* illnesses. During the period September to November there was a noticeable increase in the onset of such absences. October (11.4%) was the most common month for onset of *Psychiatric/Psychological* illnesses while in contrast December (5.8%) was the least common.

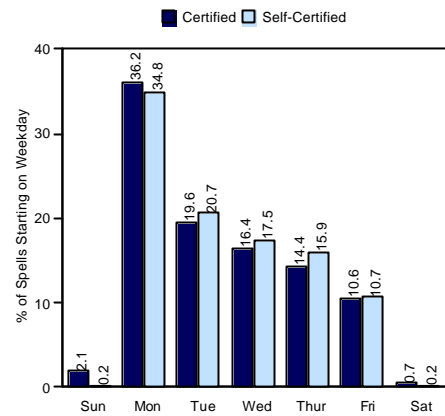
## 4.2 Analysis by Weekday during 2002/2003

As in the previous year, Monday was the most common day for the onset of absence with over one third of all certified and self-certified absences commencing.

Friday was the least likely day during the normal working week for both certified (10.6%) and self-certified (10.7%) absences to begin.

Figure 18

Onset of Absence by Weekday during 2002/2003



### 4.3 Number of Staff Absent during 2002/2003

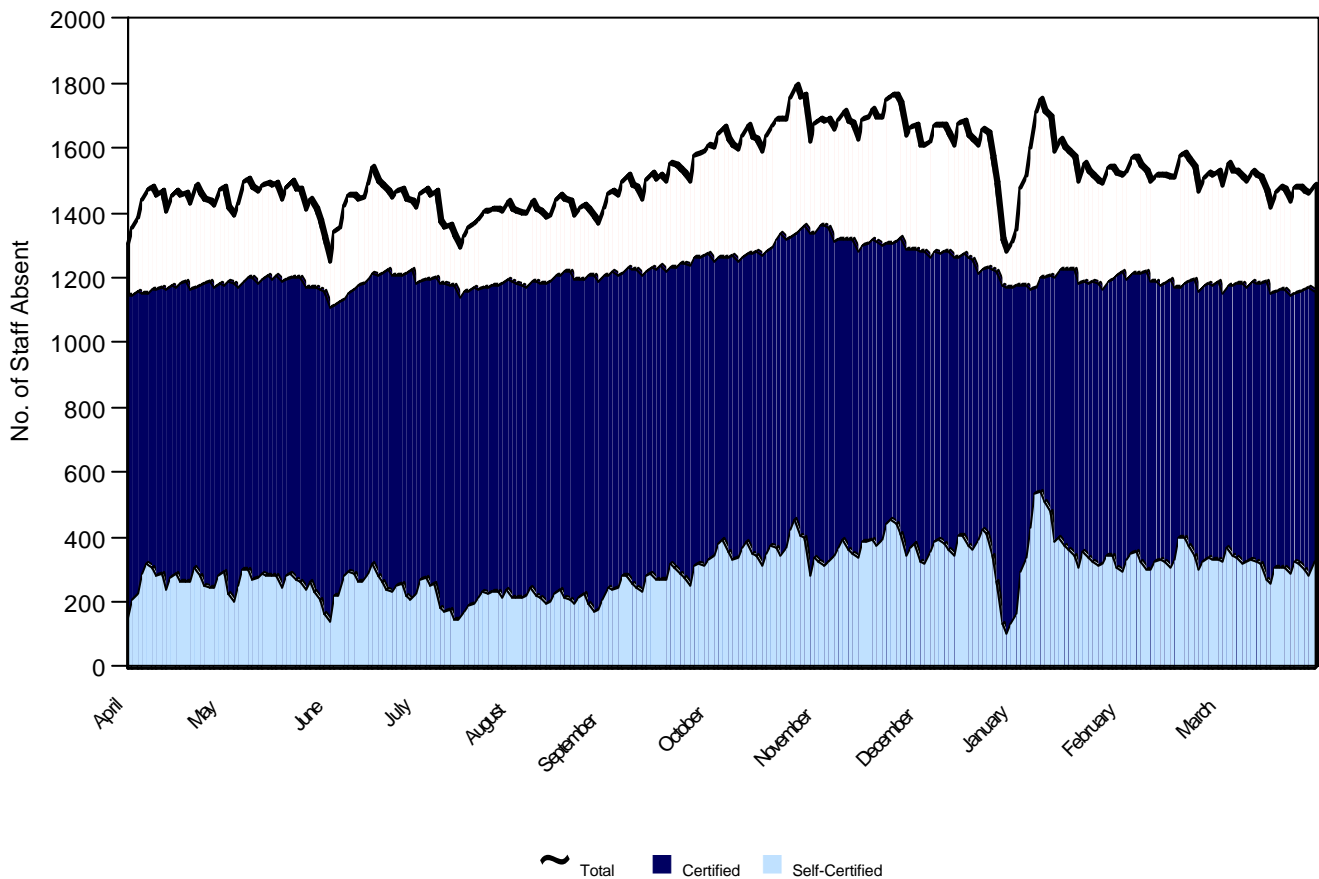
Figure 19 shows the daily variations in the number of staff absent throughout the year. The number of staff who were absent ranged from a low of 1,258 on Wednesday 5th June 2002 (immediately following the 3rd and 4th of June statutory holidays) to a high of 1,798 on Wednesday 23rd October 2002.

As with the previous year, the fluctuation in the total number of absentees throughout the year on a daily basis in the main, is attributable to variation in the number of self-certified absences. The number of certified absences was relatively more consistent, averaging 1,219 on a daily basis.

The number of staff absent during the period just before and after the Christmas holidays was noticeably low. The same trend has been visible in the previous three financial years.

**Figure 19**

**Number of Staff Absent on Each Day during 2002/2003**





Chapter 5  
Long-term Sickness Absence





## 5. Long-term Sickness Absence

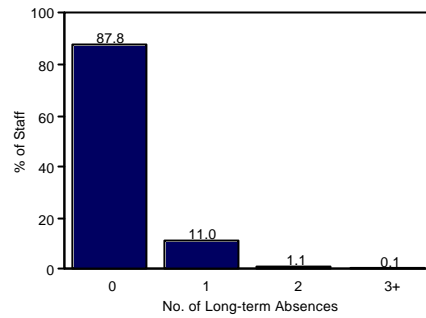
This chapter considers absence through long-term sickness. A long-term absence is defined as any spell of absence lasting more than 20 working days.

### 5.1 Prevalence of Long-term Absence

A total of 3,287 staff (12.2%) in the NI Departments had one or more spells of long-term absence during the 2002/2003 financial year, resulting in a loss of over 228,000 available working days. This was an increase over the previous financial year (11.6% of staff and 217,000 available working days lost). As already highlighted in Chapter 2, long-term absences accounted for 64.0% 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 £15.6m and was equivalent to losing the work of approximately 1,023 full-time staff for the entire year.

Figure 20

Analysis of the Number of Long-term Absence Spells



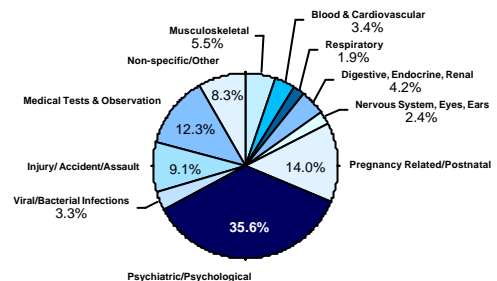
Number of Long-term Absences	Number of Staff	Percentage of Staff
0	23,588	87.8
1	2,944	11.0
2	305	1.1
3+	38	0.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>26,875</b>	<b>100</b>

### 5.2 Reason for Absence

Psychiatric/Psychological illnesses accounted for over one third (35.6%) of the total working days lost during 2002/2003 as a result of long-term absences. Pregnancy Related/Postnatal illnesses accounted for a further 14.0% and Medical Tests & Observation for 12.3%.

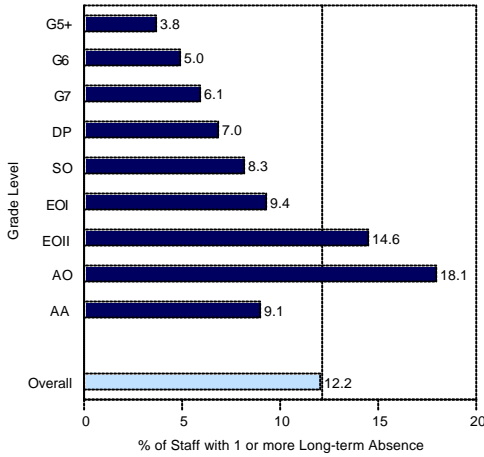
Figure 21

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



**Figure 22**

**Long-term Spells by Grade Level**

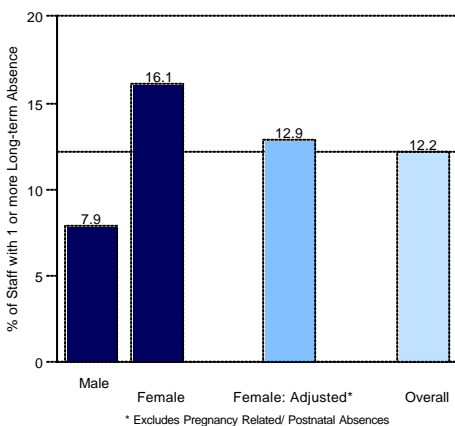


**5.3 Grade Level**

As with the previous 3 years, the incidence of long-term absence was highest at the AO grade, where 18.1% of staff had one or more spells of long-term absence during the year. This level of incidence was nearly twice that found at AA level. However, from AO level the incidence of long-term absence decreased progressively with grade, having its lowest incidence at Grade 5 level and above.

**Figure 23**

**Long-term Spells by Gender**



**5.4 Gender**

A higher proportion of females (16.1%) than males (7.9%) 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 (12.9%) remained substantially higher than that of males (See Figure 23).

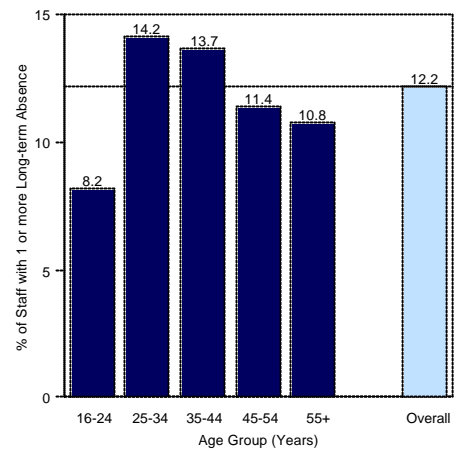
**5.5 Age Group**

**Figure 24**

Figure 24 shows that the incidence of long-term absence was lowest in the 16-24 age group, with 8.2% of staff having one or more spells of long-term absence during 2002/2003. Staff in the 25-34 age group were most likely to be absent on a long-term basis, with 14.2% having one or more spells of long-term absence. Over 63% of the total working days lost among staff in this age category were attributable to these long-term absences.

Long-term absences accounted for 70.7% of the working days lost for those aged 55 and over. Approximately one in ten staff in this age group had one or more spells of long-term absence during the year, lasting 15.6 weeks on average (See Table 3 of Appendix 4).

**Long-term Absence Spells by Age Group**



Appendix 4 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.



Chapter 6  
Year on Year Comparisons



## 6. Year on Year Comparisons - Days Lost per Staff Year

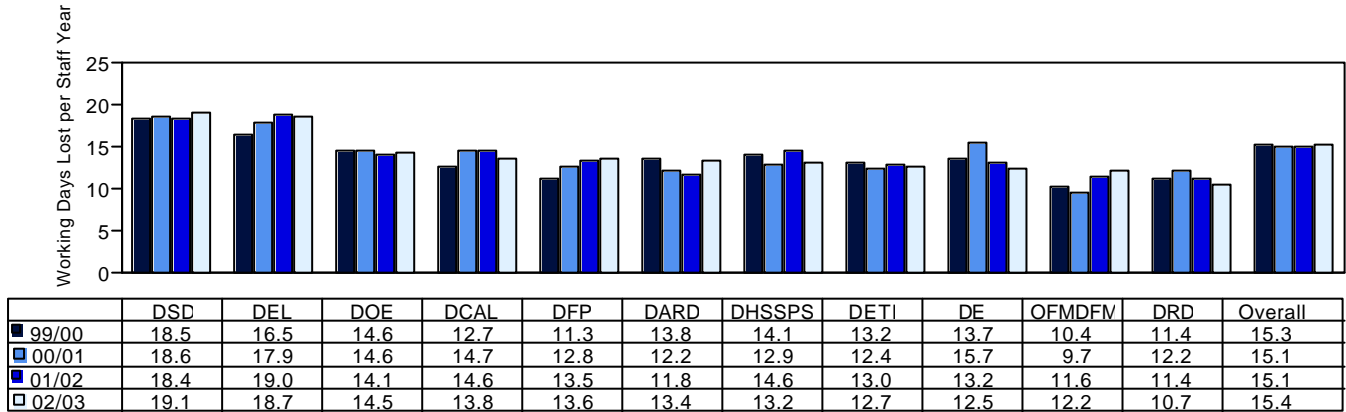
Over the four financial years, covering the period April 1999 to March 2003, the overall absence rate in the eleven NI Departments has remained relatively constant (15.3; 15.1; 15.1; 15.4 days lost per staff year). This chapter looks at the variation in the absence rates across departments, grades, genders and age groups over the four year period.

### 6.1 Departmental Absence Rates

The Departmental chart (Figure 25) gives no obvious indication of trends, either positive or negative, in the amount of days lost annually. In six of the eleven NI Departments average days lost decreased during 2002/2003 compared with the previous year. By the same token, average days lost increased in five Departments. Exactly the same result was found over the period 1999/2000 to 2002/2003. The only department showing an uninterrupted trend in levels of absence from 1999/2000 to 2002/2003 was DFP where average days lost increased from 11.3 to 13.6 over this period.

**Figure 25**

**Average Number of Days Lost Per Staff Year by Department 1999/2000 - 2002/2003**

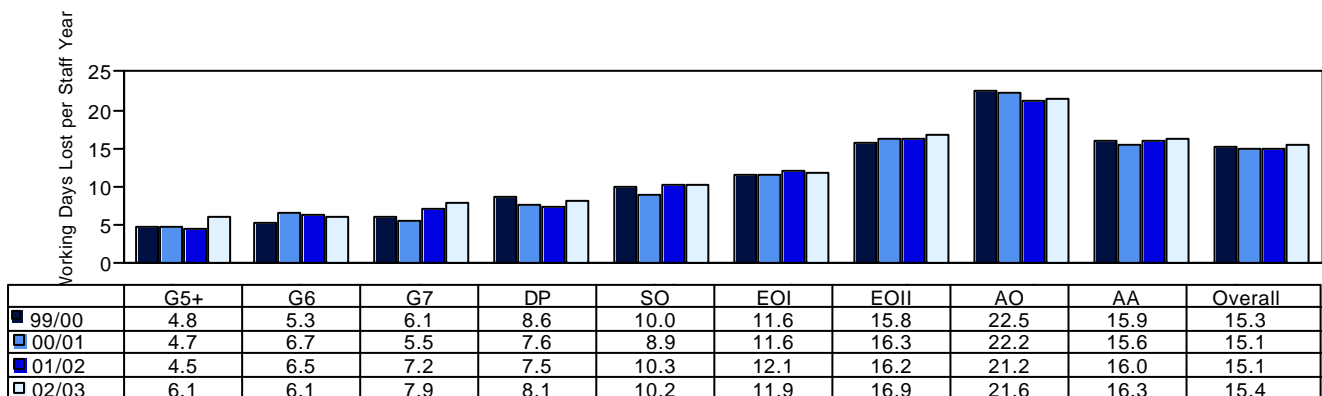


### 6.2 Absence Rates by Grade Level

Compared with the previous financial year, six of the nine grade levels showed an increase in the average number of days lost during 2002/2003. Compared with four years ago, the position in 2002/2003 was worse in seven of the nine grades.

**Figure 26**

**Average Number of Days Lost Per Staff Year by Grade Level 1999/2000 - 2002/2003**

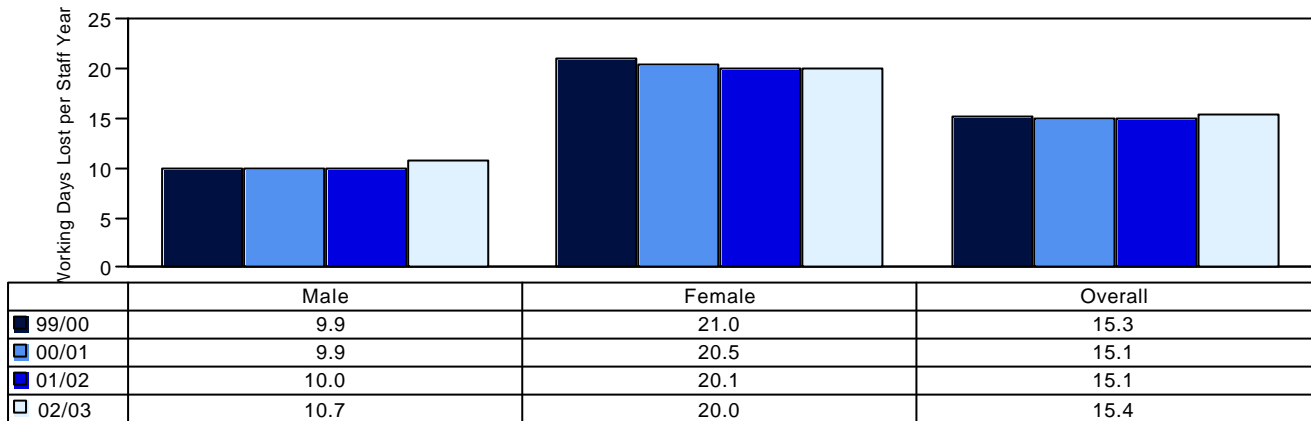


### 6.3 Absence Rates by Gender

While the absence rate among females has remained approximately twice that of males, it has shown a small but progressive decrease over the four year period. This has been offset by a progressive increase in the number of days lost by males.

**Figure 27**

**Average Number of Days Lost Per Staff Year by Gender 1999/2000 - 2002/2003**

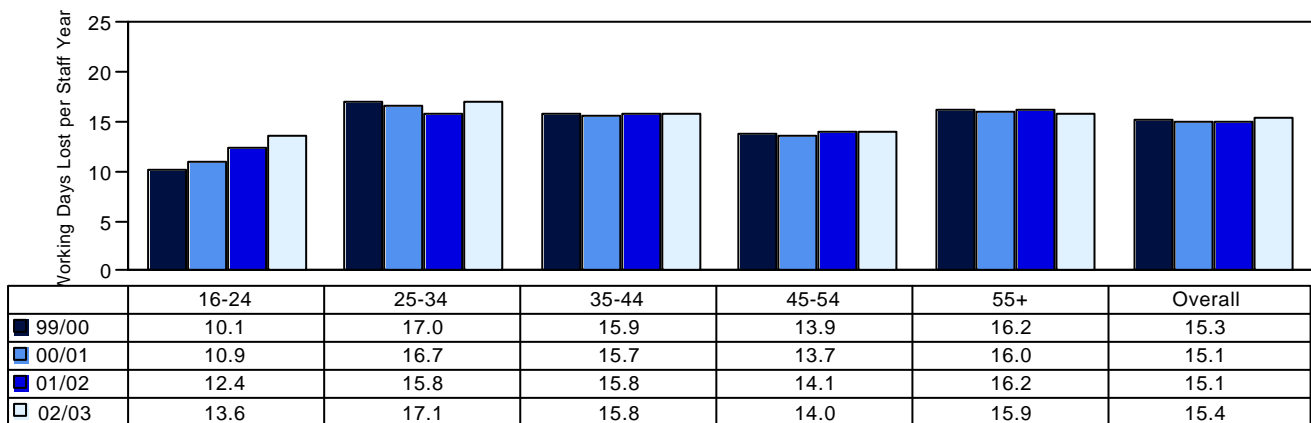


### 6.4 Absence Rates by Age Group

While the absence rate among the four older age groups has remained relatively constant over the four year period, the rate for staff aged 16 to 24, has increased steadily from 10.1 days per staff year to 13.6 days per staff year (an increase of 3.5 days lost per staff year in this age group).

**Figure 28**

**Average Number of Days Lost Per Staff Year by Age Group 1999/2000 - 2002/2003**





APPENDIX 1  
Definitions



## Appendix 1

### Definitions

Absence levels 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 “*Managing Attendance in the Public Sector (1999)*”. This approach replaced ‘working days lost per person’ which can misrepresent 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 methodology used by the cabinet office.

### Example

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 20 working days and **B** was absent for 10 working days, then the number of working days lost per staff year are 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 other approach, the number of days lost per person would be:

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

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

which overlooks the fact that one of the staff was only employed for six months.



APPENDIX 2  
Tables Relating to Chapters 1 & 2



## Appendix 2

## Tables relating to Chapter 1

Table 1

Department	% of Available Working Days Lost		
	Self-Certified	Certified	Total
DSD	1.4	7.2	8.6
DEL	1.7	6.8	8.4
DOE	1.6	5.0	6.5
DCAL	1.9	4.3	6.3
DFP	1.4	4.8	6.2
DARD	1.4	4.7	6.1
DHSSPS	1.5	4.5	6.0
DETI	1.6	4.1	5.7
DE	1.2	4.4	5.7
OFMDFM	1.3	4.3	5.5
DRD	1.2	3.7	4.9
<b>Overall</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>7.0</b>

Table 2

Grade Level	% of Available Working Days Lost		
	Self-Certified	Certified	Total
G5+	0.3	2.5	2.8
G6	0.4	2.4	2.8
G7	0.6	3.0	3.6
DP	0.8	2.9	3.7
SO	1.1	3.6	4.7
EOI	1.3	4.1	5.4
EOII	1.4	6.2	7.6
AO	1.7	8.0	9.7
AA	1.9	5.3	7.3
<b>Overall</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>7.0</b>

Table 3

Gender	% of Available Working Days Lost		
	Self-Certified	Certified	Total
Male	1.2	3.6	4.9
Female	1.6	7.4	9.0
<b>Overall</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>7.0</b>

**Tables relating to Chapter 1****Table 4**

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>% of Available Working Days Lost</b>		
	<b>Self-Certified</b>	<b>Certified</b>	<b>Total</b>
16-24	2.1	4.0	6.1
25-34	1.6	6.0	7.6
35-44	1.3	5.9	7.2
45-54	1.1	5.3	6.4
55+	1.1	6.1	7.3
<b>Overall</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>7.0</b>



## 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	2.2	0.1	57.7	0.4	15.3
G6	0.4	2.1	0.1	36.9	0.5	11.2
G7	0.6	2.3	0.2	35.1	0.8	10.0
DP	0.8	2.3	0.2	28.8	1.0	8.2
SO	0.9	2.5	0.3	27.9	1.2	8.4
EOI	1.1	2.7	0.3	27.1	1.4	8.6
EOII	1.2	2.6	0.4	31.4	1.7	10.2
AO	1.5	2.6	0.6	30.4	2.1	10.5
AA	1.9	2.3	0.4	27.1	2.3	7.1
<b>Overall</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>29.6</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>9.3</b>

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	29.2	1.3	8.0
Female	1.4	2.5	0.6	29.8	2.0	10.1
<b>Overall</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>29.6</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>9.3</b>

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	2.0	2.3	0.4	22.4	2.4	5.6
25-34	1.4	2.6	0.5	29.2	1.8	9.2
35-44	1.1	2.6	0.4	30.3	1.6	10.2
45-54	0.9	2.6	0.4	31.8	1.3	11.1
55+	0.9	2.7	0.4	35.5	1.3	12.4
<b>Overall</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>29.6</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>9.3</b>

### Table relating to Chapter 3

**Table 8**

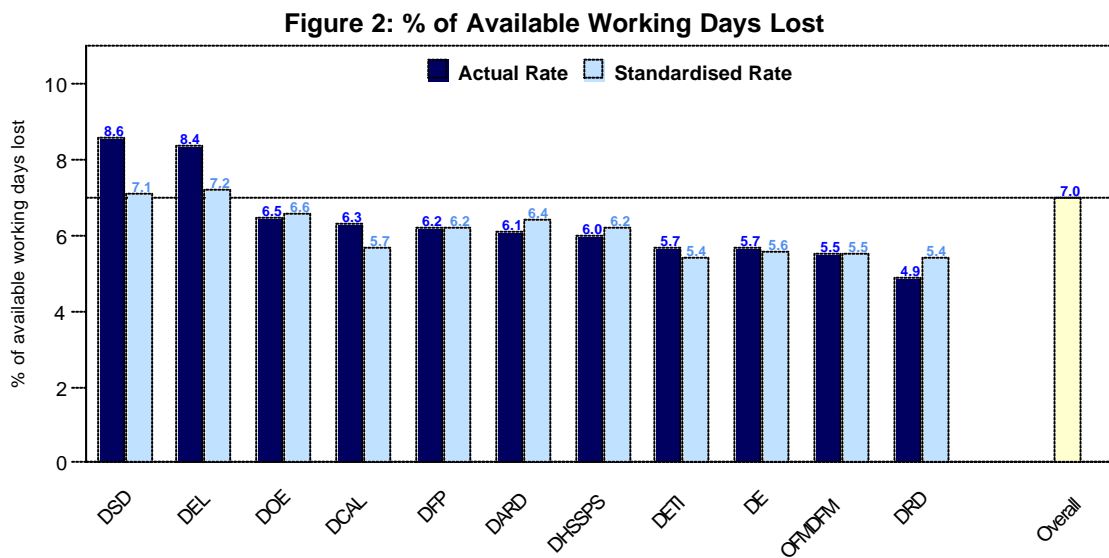
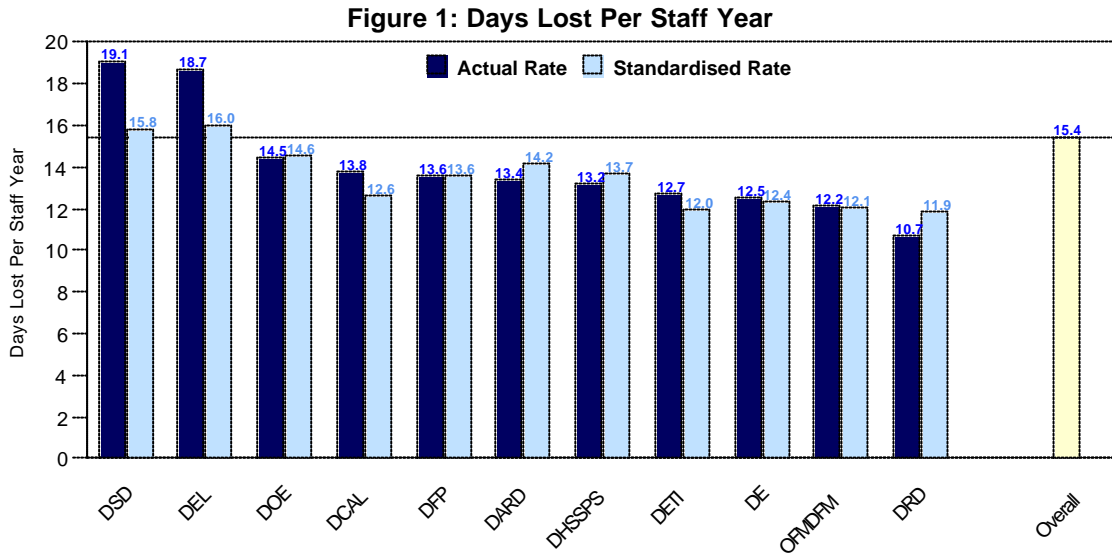
Reason	% of Available Working Days Lost		
	Self-Certified	Certified	Total
Non-specific/Other	5.7	8.2	13.9
Medical Tests &	14.2	12.5	26.6
Injury/Accident/Assault	5.3	9.5	14.8
Viral/Bacterial Infections	37.9	5.9	43.8
Psychiatric/Psychological	3.3	32.0	35.3
Pregnancy Related/Postnatal	2.0	12.5	14.6
Nervous System, Eyes, Ears	4.3	2.5	6.8
Digestive, Endocrine, Renal	17.5	4.7	22.2
Respiratory	5.4	3.0	8.4
Blood & Cardiovascular	1.1	3.3	4.4
Musculoskeletal	3.4	5.8	9.2
<b>Overall</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>7.0</b>

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





## 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	21.0	81.3
G6	6.2	14.2	71.9
G7	7.4	14.8	69.3
DP	8.3	12.2	62.3
SO	9.8	12.8	61.3
EOI	11.8	12.1	60.3
EOII	18.0	12.5	66.3
AO	23.4	12.3	66.9
AA	15.1	12.1	56.4
<b>Overall</b>	<b>15.9</b>	<b>12.4</b>	<b>64.0</b>

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	10.0	12.8	59.5
Female	21.7	12.2	66.4
<b>Overall</b>	<b>15.9</b>	<b>12.4</b>	<b>64.0</b>

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	12.7	10.1	47.0
25-34	18.4	11.8	63.4
35-44	16.9	12.5	66.5
45-54	14.3	13.5	68.5
55+	14.5	15.6	70.7
<b>Overall</b>	<b>15.9</b>	<b>12.4</b>	<b>64.0</b>



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	2001/2002	2002/2003	1999/2000	2000/2001	2001/2002	2002/2003
DSD	8.3	8.4	8.3	8.6	18.5	18.6	18.4	19.1
DEL	7.4	8.1	8.6	8.4	16.5	17.9	19.0	18.7
DOE	6.6	6.6	6.4	6.5	14.6	14.6	14.1	14.5
DCAL	5.8	6.7	6.6	6.3	12.7	14.7	14.6	13.8
DFP	5.1	5.8	6.1	6.2	11.3	12.8	13.5	13.6
DARD	6.2	5.5	5.3	6.1	13.8	12.2	11.8	13.4
DHSSPS	6.4	5.8	6.6	6.0	14.1	12.9	14.6	13.2
DETI	5.9	5.6	5.9	5.7	13.2	12.4	13.0	12.7
DE	6.2	7.1	5.9	5.7	13.7	15.7	13.2	12.5
OFMDFM	4.7	4.4	5.3	5.5	10.4	9.7	11.6	12.2
DRD	5.2	5.5	5.2	4.9	11.4	12.2	11.4	10.7
<b>Overall</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>15.3</b>	<b>15.1</b>	<b>15.1</b>	<b>15.4</b>

**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	2002/2003	1999/2000	2000/2001	2001/2002	2002/2003
G5+	2.2	2.2	2.1	2.8	4.8	4.7	4.5	6.1
G6	2.4	3.1	3.0	2.8	5.3	6.7	6.5	6.1
G7	2.8	2.5	3.3	3.6	6.1	5.5	7.2	7.9
DP	3.9	3.5	3.4	3.7	8.6	7.6	7.5	8.1
SO	4.6	4.1	4.7	4.7	10.0	8.9	10.3	10.2
EOI	5.2	5.3	5.5	5.4	11.6	11.6	12.1	11.9
EOII	7.1	7.4	7.3	7.6	15.8	16.3	16.2	16.9
AO	10.1	10.0	9.5	9.7	22.5	22.2	21.2	21.6
AA	7.1	7.0	7.1	7.3	15.9	15.6	16.0	16.3
<b>Overall</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>15.3</b>	<b>15.1</b>	<b>15.1</b>	<b>15.4</b>

Table 3

Gender	% of Available Working Days Lost				No. of Days Lost per Staff Year			
	1999/2000	2000/2001	2001/2002	2002/2003	1999/2000	2000/2001	2001/2002	2002/2003
Male	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.9	9.9	9.9	10.0	10.7
Female	9.4	9.2	9.1	9.0	21.0	20.5	20.1	20.0
<b>Overall</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>15.3</b>	<b>15.1</b>	<b>15.1</b>	<b>15.4</b>

Table 4

Age Group	% of Available Working Days Lost				No. of Days Lost per Staff Year			
	1999/2000	2000/2001	2001/2002	2002/2003	1999/2000	2000/2001	2001/2002	2002/2003
16-24	4.5	4.8	5.5	6.1	10.1	10.9	12.4	13.6
25-34	7.6	7.5	7.1	7.6	17.0	16.7	15.8	17.1
35-44	7.1	7.1	7.1	7.2	15.9	15.7	15.8	15.8
45-54	6.3	6.2	6.4	6.4	13.9	13.7	14.1	14.0
55+	7.4	7.3	7.4	7.3	16.2	16.0	16.2	15.9
<b>Overall</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>15.3</b>	<b>15.1</b>	<b>15.1</b>	<b>15.4</b>

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	2002/2003
0	32.6	35.2	35.1	32.8
1	27.0	26.8	27.6	28.2
2	19.2	19.0	18.8	19.3
3	11.3	10.2	10.2	10.8
4	5.3	5.0	4.4	4.6
5	2.4	2.0	2.1	2.2
6+	2.1	1.8	1.9	2.0

Table 6

Duration of Absence Spells (Working Days)	% of Spells			
	1999/2000	2000/2001	2001/2002	2002/2003
1-2	47.1	46.6	46.2	46.3
3-5	31.4	31.7	31.9	31.8
6-10	7.0	6.7	6.7	6.6
11-20	5.8	5.7	5.7	5.7
More than 20	8.8	9.3	9.5	9.5

Table 7

Reason	% of Absence Spells				% of Working Days Lost			
	1999/2000	2000/2001	2001/2002	2002/2003	1999/2000	2000/2001	2001/2002	2002/2003
Non-specific/Other	5.2	5.3	5.6	6.6	4.8	4.5	5.9	7.7
Medical Tests &	8.9	12.6	10.5	13.3	12.2	16.9	11.4	12.8
Injury/Accident/Assault	6.4	6.5	6.6	6.0	10.0	9.6	9.6	8.7
Viral/Bacterial Infections	38.3	33.0	33.9	30.8	16.0	13.2	13.6	12.5
Psychiatric/Psychological	4.7	4.8	6.1	6.7	19.6	20.4	24.6	26.1
Pregnancy	4.2	4.0	3.8	3.5	14.1	12.3	12.6	10.4
Nervous System, Eyes, Ears	5.4	5.2	5.2	4.8	3.2	2.7	2.5	2.9
Digestive, Endocrine, Renal	16.0	17.7	17.5	18.2	6.9	8.0	7.3	7.3
Respiratory	4.9	5.4	5.2	4.9	3.3	3.5	3.3	3.5
Blood & Cardiovascular	1.6	1.5	1.6	1.4	3.7	3.4	3.5	2.9
Musculoskeletal	4.3	4.1	4.1	3.9	6.2	5.6	5.8	5.3

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	2002/2003
G5+	69.7	63.0	68.7	81.3
G6	51.6	69.6	67.7	71.9
G7	57.3	60.3	65.8	69.3
DP	62.1	60.5	62.2	62.3
SO	59.5	57.6	62.2	61.3
EOI	56.2	59.8	62.6	60.3
EOII	62.6	66.6	66.6	66.3
AO	66.6	67.6	68.2	66.9
AA	55.2	57.9	56.6	56.4
<b>Overall</b>	<b>62.0</b>	<b>64.0</b>	<b>64.7</b>	<b>64.0</b>

**Table 9**

Long-term Absence by Gender	% of the Total Working Days Lost Attributable to Long-term Absence			
	1999/2000	2000/2001	2001/2002	2002/2003
Male	53.4	56.9	57.8	59.5
Female	66.3	67.5	68.2	66.4
<b>Overall</b>	<b>62.0</b>	<b>64.0</b>	<b>64.7</b>	<b>64.0</b>

**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	2002/2003
16 - 24	30.2	35.7	43.5	47.0
25 - 34	59.7	60.9	61.6	63.4
35 - 44	64.5	67.2	67.1	66.5
45 - 54	66.1	67.8	69.7	68.5
55+	69.0	73.3	74.6	70.7
<b>Overall</b>	<b>62.0</b>	<b>64.0</b>	<b>64.7</b>	<b>64.0</b>

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