

Absence Report Quarter Two 2009/10

Quarter 1 Absence 2009/2010

	Quarter 1 2007/08	Quarter 1 2008/09	Quarter 1 2009/10
Short Term (less than 8 days)	351	341	288
Medium Term (more than 8 days less than 2 months)	295	606	452
Long Term (More than 2 months)	279	700	455
	925	1647	1195

Quarter 2 Absence 2009/2010

	Quarter 2 2007/08	Quarter 2 2008/09	Quarter 2 2009/10
Short Term (less than 8 days)	367.59	430.91	541
Medium Term (more than 8 days less than 2 months)	372	417	458
Long Term (More than 2 months)	363	541	358
Total FTE days	1103	1389	1357

The average number of days lost per person for the second quarter of 2009/2010 is **2.8 days per person**. If the absence rate continued at the same rate as the first quarter the final outturn figure would be **11 days lost per person** (this is dependent upon the final headcount remaining the same). This is an increase on the first quarter when the average number of days lost per person was 2.47.

Out of 484 staff, 147 employees had absence in quarter 2. The actual days lost to sickness absence for broken down by length of absence are as follows:

- Short term - (less than 8 days) 541 days which represents **40 %** of the total days lost.
- Medium term (more than 8 days but less than 2 months) 458 days which represents **33.5%**.
- Long term (more than 2 months) 455 days which represents **26.5%** of the total.

Short Term Absence for Quarter 2 2009/10

Short term absence levels have increased in the second quarter for the first time in three years. The increase is a reverse of the situation reported for quarter 1 which experienced the best short term absence levels for three years. In quarter 2 short term absence represented 40% of the absence compared with 24% in quarter 1.

The emergence of seasonal colds and flu as well as possibly swine flu is beginning to make an impact on the number of short term days lost and 156.5 days were lost as a result of cold and flu. This is an **increase** of 92 days compared to 2008 and 112 days compared to 2007.

There is also a relationship between the increases in short term absence rates and the reduction in long term absence. We have implemented 11 graded returns* in the second quarter of 2009 for employees to assist a quicker return to work from a period of prolonged absence – this has contributed to 105 days absence from work. Graded returns are highly recommended by health professionals as a tactic to assist employees to return to work in a structured way and are usually implemented on average over a period of 4 weeks.

**Graded return is the phrase we use to describe the situation in which a long term absent employee is phased back into the workplace with part time working. This affects short term absence as sick pay is used to continue to make up their pay until they take on their full working pattern.*

Long term absence for Quarter 2 2009/10

Long term absence has reduced in quarter 2 to 26.5% as compared with 38% of absence in quarter 1. Long term absence has significantly reduced (by 78%) compared to the same period last year.

- The total number of FTE long term days lost was 358 through the absence of 6 employees.
- 4 of the employees are currently absent with stress, depression, anxiety, mental health and fatigue. This was not work related but related to personal issues and accounts for 17.8% of the total days lost (242 days)
- 2 employees in Street Scene have been absent through back problems and other muscular skeletal problems which accounts for 8.5% of the total days lost. (116 days).
- 1 employee has received a first warning regarding their absence and at the time of writing we have dismissed another employee which may help to reduce long term absence rates in quarter 3.
- There has been no change to the previous quarter and Planning, Street Scene, Finance and Housing and Social Inclusion are still the only areas which are affected by long term absence at the current time.

Medium Term Absence for Quarter 2 2009/10

- Medium term absence accounts for 458 FTE days lost and there are **28 employees** in this category.
- 6 employees lost 189 FTE days through back problems and other muscular skeletal issues.
- 84 days lost were lost due to personal stress, depression, anxiety and fatigue.
- The remaining days lost were as a result of a mixture of chest and respiratory, hospital treatment, eye and stomach problems.

What are the main reasons for absence in Quarter 2?

The main reasons for absence in the second quarter are personal stress and depression, muscular skeletal issues and cold/flu.

A total of 364 days were lost due to personal stress and depression which accounts for 26% of the total days lost (1357). We currently have 4 employees who have been long term absent (more than 2 months) with personal stress and depression.

20% of the total days lost (276.5 days) in quarter 2 were attributable to back problems and muscular skeletal issues. 49% of the total (112 days) were lost due to the absence of 7 Street Scene employees, however 2 have recently been dismissed.

Absence for cold and flu has been recorded at the highest level for 3 years, it is unknown what percentage is attributable to Swine Flu as the symptoms of Swine Flu are similar to that

of seasonal flu and therefore it is assumed that this has had some bearing on the increase. The impact of colds and flu may increase further in quarter 3 as we approach the winter period. The latest figures of Swine Flu cases as at 22 October 2009 was an increase of 26,000 from the previous week.

What action are we taking?

- We are continuing with Absence Review meetings and meet regularly with Managers to discuss cases and future actions.
- We are continuing to ensure that managers keep in touch with employees whilst they are off sick as this is known to have a positive effect.
- We continue to monitor reasons for absence in all areas to attempt to uncover root causes of absence to help us determine future action.
- There are issues around muscular skeletal absence with Street Scene employees presenting with carpal tunnel syndrome. This has emerged as a result of vibration when using particular equipment. Street Scene is following Health and Safety Guidance which involves an initial Hand Arm Vibration questionnaire annually with referral to Occupational Health where symptoms are in evidence.
- We are investigating costs involved in tackling root causes of absence associated with some lifestyle issues which lead to ill health such as poor diet, alcohol and smoking. We already provide Counselling, NHS Stop Smoking information and education for these issues but wish to take this further.
- We have published material relating to Migraine Awareness for managing the condition in a central location to highlight awareness and remedies.
- We are hosting the Happy Healthy Here Week in November which offers employees insights into various lifestyle, health and stress management information, techniques and activities to help promote well being. These include:

Reiki taster (for physical pains, injuries and emotional trauma)

Reflexology taster

Tui Na (pronounced twee nah – a deep massage through clothes)

Stress Management talk

Slimming World – introduction

Healthy eating

Table tennis

Wii Fit

Activate guided walks

Kinesiology (pronounced kin-easy-ology. A non invasive, holistic therapy using gentle muscle testing to detect imbalances in the body which can lead to common ailments

Free 45 minute squash sessions at Sidmouth Leisure Centre