

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR HR AND CUSTOMER SERVICE****SICKNESS ABSENCE PERFORMANCE AS AT 31<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER 2012****Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide a further quarterly update for Members about Nottinghamshire County Council's performance in relation to current levels of sickness absence across its workforce.

**Information and Advice****Background:**

2. One of the Council's strategic priorities is to reduce the number of working days lost due to employee sickness absence. At the Personnel Committee on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2012 Members received updated data and analysis of the Council's performance against this key corporate performance indicator which set out the situation as at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2012.
3. The Council's established corporate performance target for the year 2012/13 is **8.25 days** absence per employee per annum; the longer term stretch target is **8.17 days** absence per employee per annum by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014.
4. The introduction of phase 1 of the Council's new Business Management System (BMS), in November 2011 and on-going work to implement phase 2 by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013, now enables the majority of managers to directly undertake real time reporting of sickness absence amongst their teams.
5. In order to ensure that all absences are being appropriately reported, all managers are regularly reminded through the Managers' Resource Centre and the corporate Attendance Management training programme of their responsibility to ensure all absence is recorded in a timely and consistent manner.

**Current Performance:**

6. The data set out in detail in **Appendix A and B** to this report reflects the current, known, position as at the end of the third quarter of 2012/13, that is 1<sup>st</sup> October to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2012, for the majority of direct services who now report absence through the SAP system. This has been combined with the figures for schools and a small number of direct employees whose absence is

still reported through the Cyborg system pending the full implementation of BMS Phase 2.

7. This data illustrates that the current level for the third quarter 2012/13 is **8.2 days** sickness per employee on average per annum. This represents a slight increase of **0.28 days** on the previous quarter.
8. However the overall trend of improvement evident since the introduction of a more strategic approach to employee well-being is maintained. Absence levels remain **0.03 days** above the Council's current in-year target and show an improvement equating to **0.59 days** on performance in the comparable quarter during 2011/12, when it stood at **8.81 days**.
9. Despite the absence of a flu pandemic, the usual seasonal illnesses prevalent in winter appear to have impacted with a 0.71% increase in absence attributed to "colds, flu and sore throats" reported this quarter.
11. In addition, as work on phase 2 BMS implementation progresses towards completion and the system embeds, it would be expected that managers are now recording absence on the SAP system in a more accurate and timely manner.
12. The benefits of being able to extract the majority of absence data from one system have also provided greater consistency and the current data is likely to more accurately reflect actual trends.
13. The next report to Personnel Committee will set out the known situation as at the 2012/13 year end that is as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013.

#### **Stress - update:**

14. The absence reasons report for Quarter 3 2012/13 (**Appendix C**), shows that, in common with all local authorities, in the current climate of continuous change, absence attributed to stress and stress related illness continues to be the single greatest cause of sickness absence in the Council, having been **20.65%** at the beginning of the current year.
15. Currently stress accounts for **19.11 %** of all recorded absence. Despite the potential for uncertainty generated by the issue of a further section 188 notice on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2012 , this shows an on-going trend of improvement, with a significant decrease of **0.48%** from **19.59%** at the previous quarter.
16. This further improvement now places the Council firmly below the currently reported County Council average for stress related absence, which is **19.40%\***.
17. This indicates that the Council's Employee Health and Wellbeing action plan, with its significant emphasis on building individual resilience and preventing and managing stress as part of the Council's wider Workforce Strategy, is having a positive impact.

### **Long term absence:**

18. Further improvement and a positive trend of on-going reduction is indicated in **Appendix D**, which shows that, for the first time since this data was reported to Members in December 2010, the ratio of long term absence (that is of 4 or more weeks in duration), compared to short term, is currently less than **50.00%**, standing at **49.55%**; having been as high as **59.45%** previously.
19. This betters the current County Council average of **54.76%\*** long term absence by as much as **5.21%** and indicates that the strategic focus on ensuring that managers support employees to return to work at the earliest opportunity has been effective.

### **Employee Health and Wellbeing Action Plan - update:**

20. It is anticipated that, with further development, the final delivery of all elements of the action plan for the current year will help secure the achievement of both the Council's sickness absence target for 2012/13 and its longer term stretch target.
21. Reflecting success to date, the Council was recently awarded the bronze level national certificate for Wellbeing@Work in recognition of its work to promote health and wellbeing in the workplace and hopes to consolidate this at silver level over the next few months.
22. Further activity during the current quarter included:
  - Running the third Employee Wellbeing Road show of the year held on 12<sup>th</sup> December at Sherwood Energy Village, Ollerton, run in conjunction with the mental health charity.
  - Delivering a seasonal flu campaign, in partnership with NHS Nottinghamshire County, this offered all employees a free flu jab to protect themselves and vulnerable service users from infection.
  - Recruiting, training and deploying a further 6 Workplace Health Champions, bringing the total to 25 Countywide.
  - Increasing the numbers of managers undertaking the mandatory corporate attendance management training course which will achieve a 34% improvement in participation and see 83% of all managers trained overall by April 2013.

### **Next steps:**

23. The next quarterly report to Personnel Committee will include a full year end update on the outcomes arising from the delivery of the Employee Health and Wellbeing Action Plan for 2012 -13.
24. Consideration will be given from April 2013 onward to reviewing and refining the employee health and well-being priorities for 2013/14 and aligning these more closely to the organisational development objectives set out in the

Workforce Strategy.

### **Other Options Considered**

25. No other options are currently being considered.

### **Reason for Recommendations**

26. The recommendation in this report will enable Members to review the current levels of performance and direction of travel set out in this report and the actions that are in place to maintain a level of performance which meets the Council's identified targets and supports continuous improvement in levels of attendance across the Council.

Regular update reports will be submitted on a quarterly basis.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

27. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

### **Human Resources Implications**

The human resources implications are implicit in the body of the report. The trades unions are being engaged in the delivery of the Employee Health and Wellbeing Action Plan through the Joint Wellbeing and Attendance Management Steering Group.

### **Equalities Implications**

The Council's Attendance Management policy and procedure applies equally to all directly employed staff. There is a separate policy which is applicable to all Community Schools and is recommended to all schools with different governance arrangements. These procedures contain guidance which ensures that appropriate management of the sickness absence of employees with a disability complies with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

### **Financial Implications**

The financial cost of sickness to any large organisation will clearly be significant and, along with increased productivity and engagement, there are significant savings to be drawn down from reduced absence rates.

It remains as yet impracticable to establish the true cost of absence to the Council as this is a complex calculation which needs to take into account a

range of related factors, including the cost of providing cover in front line service areas.

Following the migration of all employee data into the Business Management System post Phase 2 implementation, it is anticipated that, during the next financial year, one of the benefits arising will be that the system will be able to provide the range of information necessary to inform a detailed analysis and accurate breakdown of the actual cost.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Members note:

- 1) the current levels of performance
- 2) improvements and achievements to date.

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**Service Director HR and Customer Service**  
**Environment and Resources**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:**

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### **Constitutional Comments (KK 12/02/13)**

28. The proposals in this report are within the remit of the Personnel Committee.

### **Financial Comments (SEM 11/02/13)**

29. There are no specific financial implications arising from the report.

### **Background Papers**

Nottinghamshire County Council Workforce Strategy 2010-14

\*Local Government Association Workforce Survey 2011 (2012 update due for publication Spring 2013)

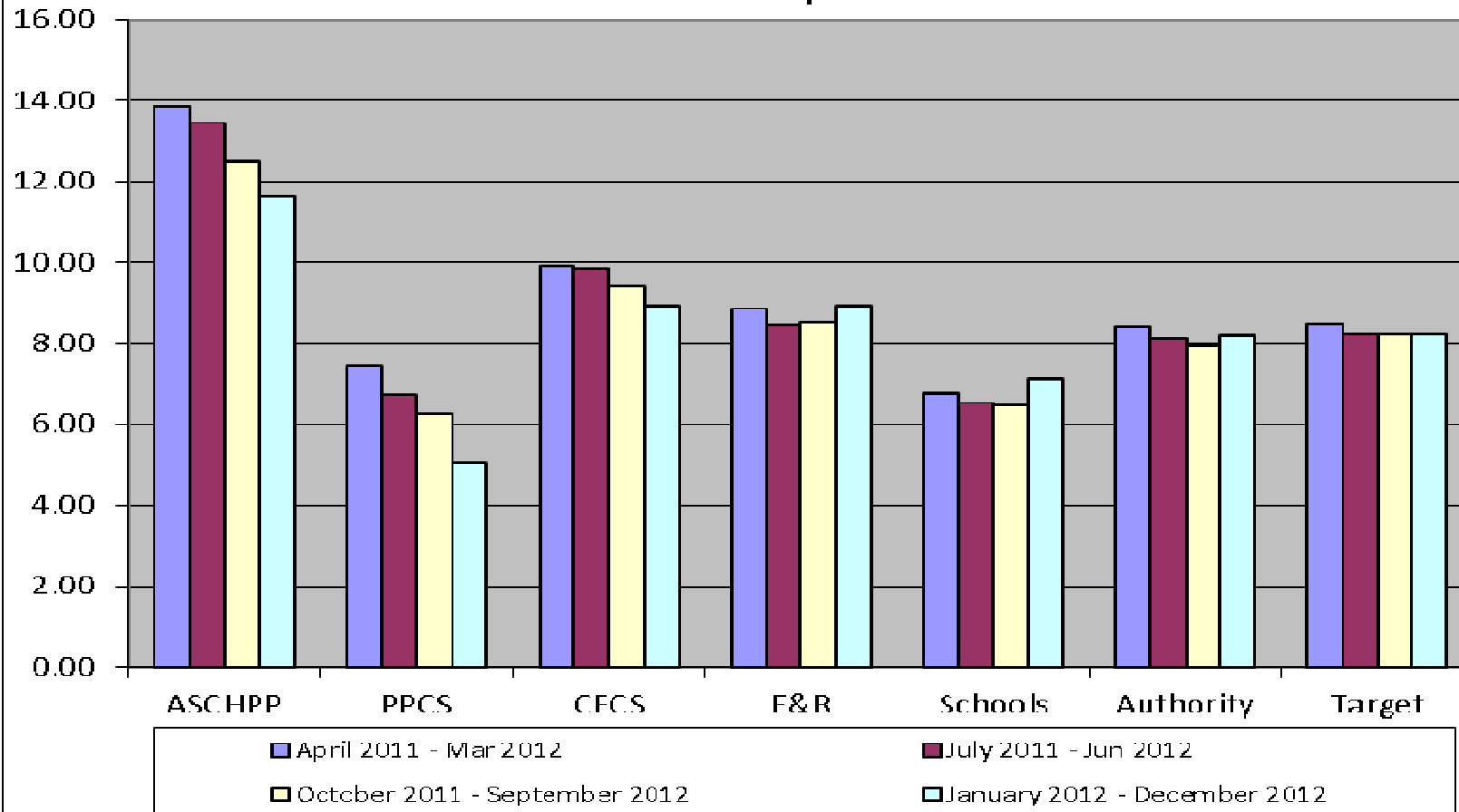
Trade union side comments.

### **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All



**Appendix A: Overall Performance (rolling basis):  
Average number of days sick per employee for the authority by  
department**

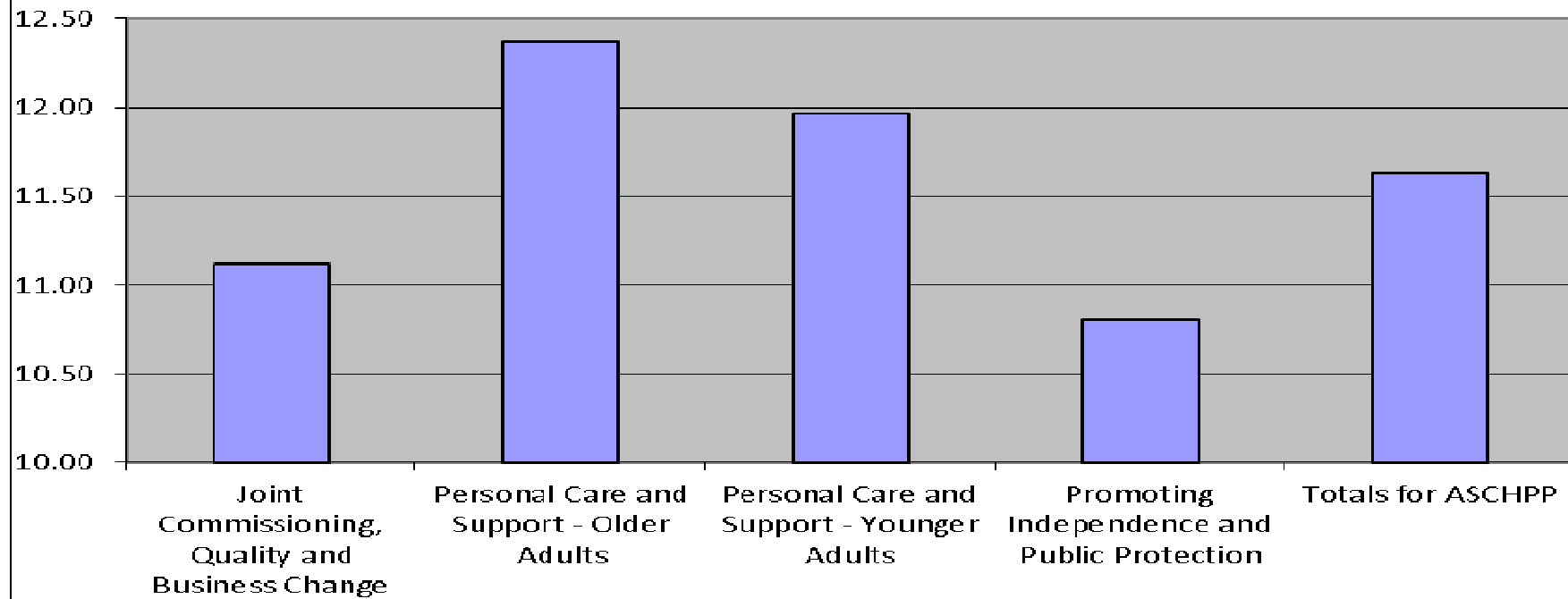


	<b>April 2011 - Mar 2012</b>	<b>July 2011 - Jun 2012</b>	<b>October 2011 - September 2012</b>	<b>January 2012 - December 2012</b>
<b>ASCHPP</b>	13.86	13.45	12.48	11.63
<b>PPCS</b>	7.47	6.75	6.27	5.05
<b>CFCS</b>	9.94	9.84	9.40	8.93
<b>E&amp;R</b>	8.85	8.45	8.52	8.94
<b>Schools</b>	6.77	6.54	6.48	7.12
<b>Authority</b>	8.43	8.16	7.94	8.22
<b>Target</b>	<b>8.50</b>	<b>8.25</b>	<b>8.25</b>	<b>8.25</b>

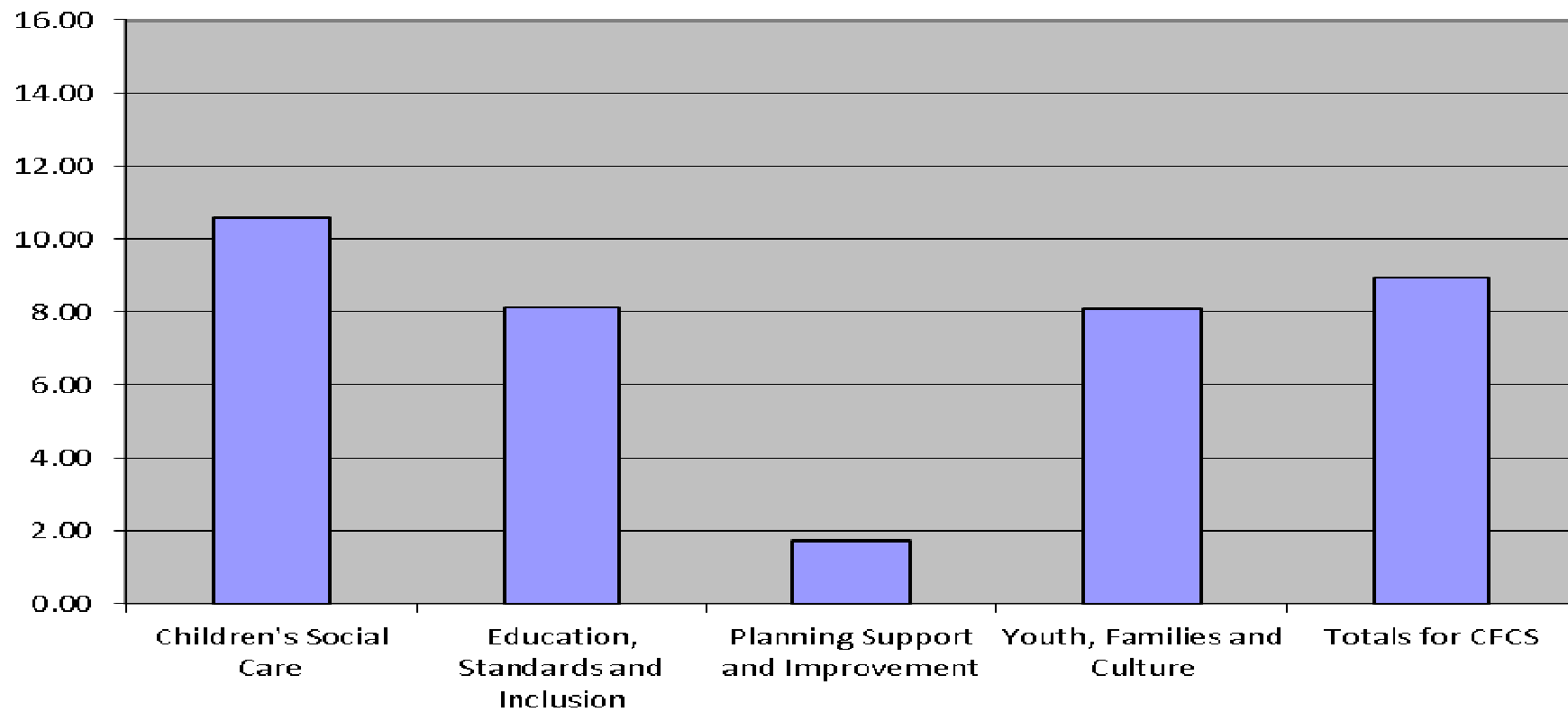
**Appendix B: Departmental Performance (rolling basis):**



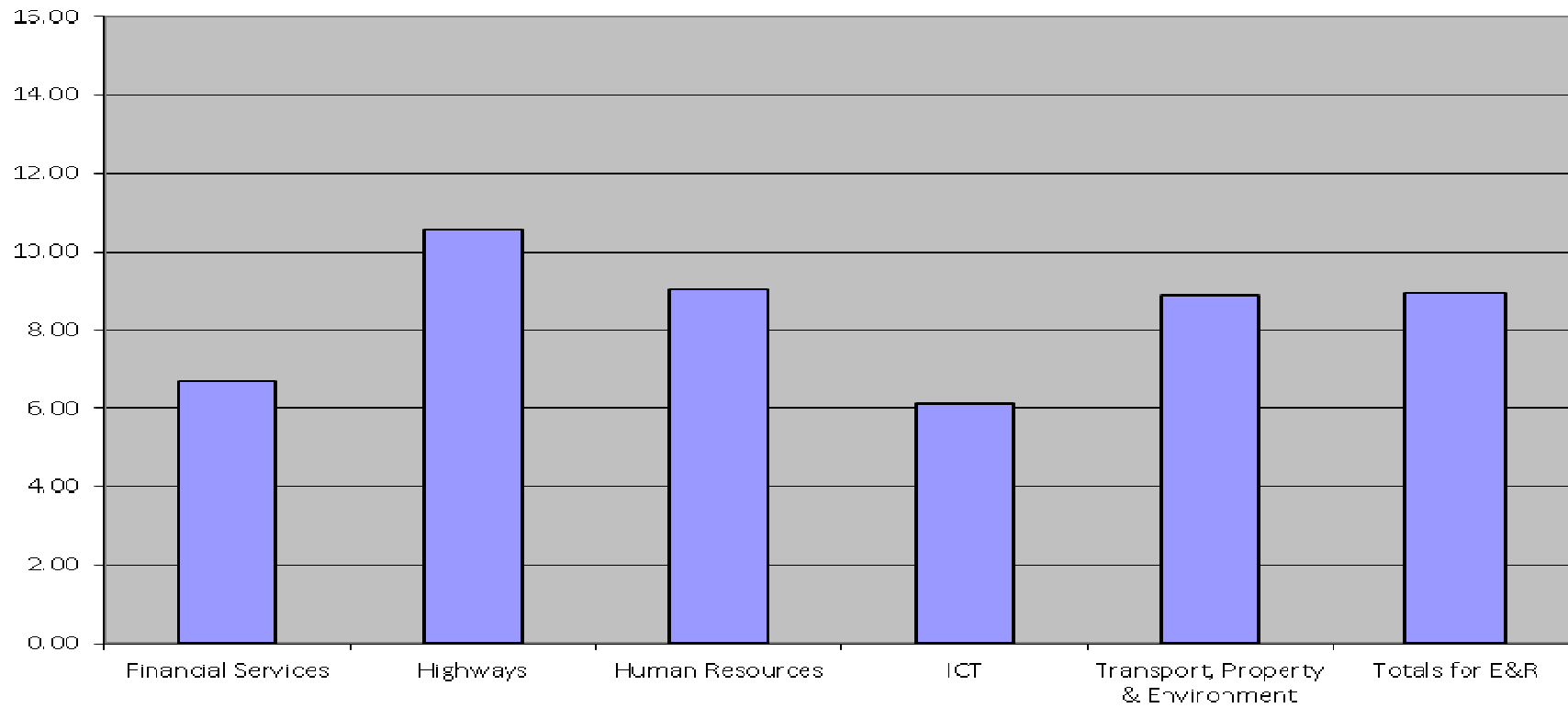
**ASCHPP**  
**January 2012 - December 2012**



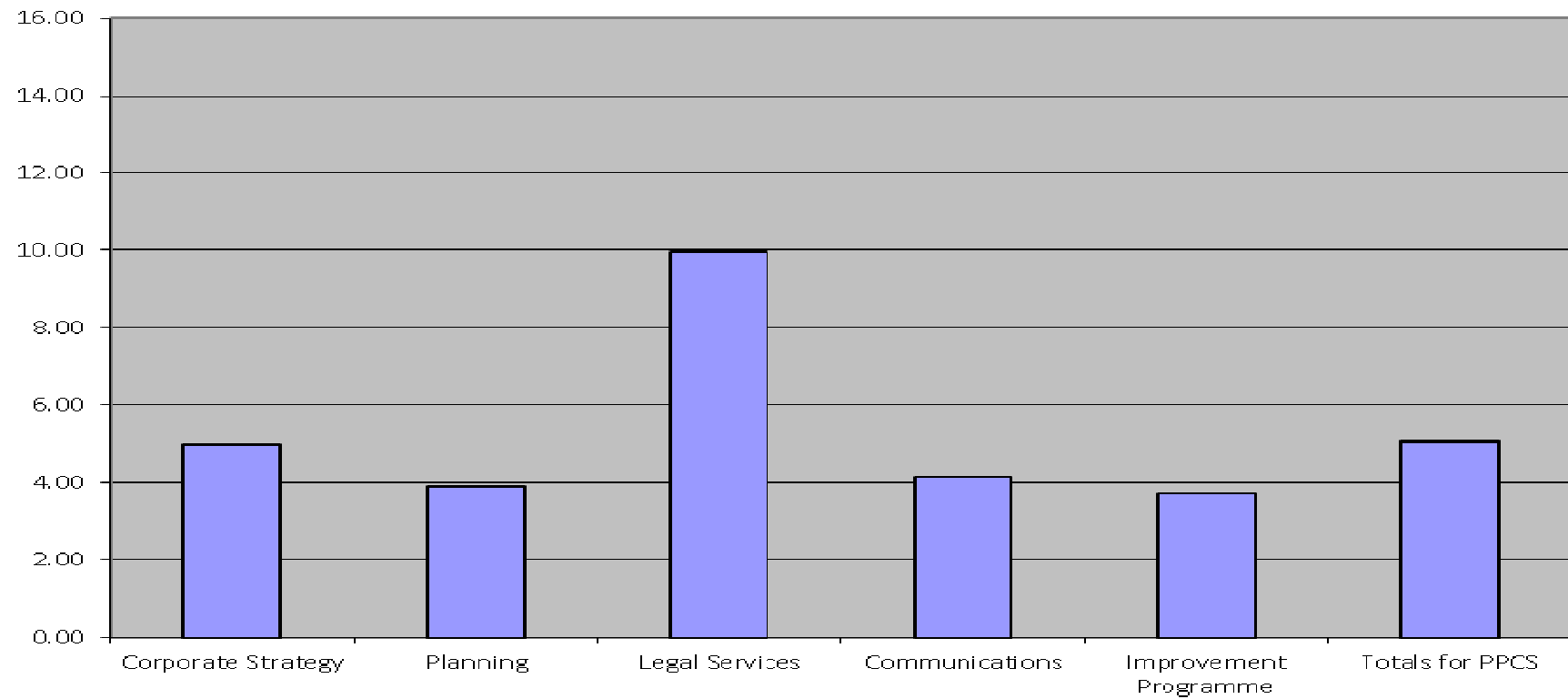
**CFCS  
January 2012 - December 2012**



**Environment & Resources  
January 2012 - December 2012**



**PPCS**  
**January 2012 - December 2012**



**Appendix C: Reasons for absence 1<sup>st</sup> October – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2012:**

Department:	BACK PROBLEM	OTHER MUSC PROBLEM	STRESS / DEPRESSION	COLD / FLU / SORE THROAT	HEADACHE / MIGRAINE	OPERATION / POST OP	CHEST / RESPIRATORY	PREGNANCY RELATED	STOMACH / DIGESTION	HEART / BLOOD PRESSURE	INFECTION	SKIN DISORDER	OTHER	NOT SUPPLIED
Adult Social Care & Health	7.60%	10.85%	20.71%	8.01%	1.46%	16.79%	2.69%	1.10%	7.32%	1.64%	2.72%	0.47%	15.85%	2.80%
Child Families & Cultural Services	4.29%	10.21%	28.35%	9.47%	1.76%	14.38%	2.85%	1.29%	7.80%	2.32%	2.31%	0.27%	13.45%	1.25%
Environment & Resources	9.62%	16.32%	13.00%	7.32%	1.60%	16.65%	1.85%	1.39%	7.68%	2.18%	2.77%	0.43%	16.97%	2.22%
Policy, Planning & Corporate Services	0.22%	2.52%	43.91%	19.21%	5.01%	3.08%	2.63%	0.95%	11.20%	0.45%	6.05%	0.00%	4.76%	0.00%
Schools	4.67%	8.27%	18.40%	12.94%	2.89%	18.07%	3.01%	1.85%	13.08%	1.24%	3.66%	0.30%	9.26%	2.35%
<b>Totals</b>	6.45%	11.27%	<b>19.11%</b>	<b>10.00%</b>	2.11%	16.74%	2.60%	1.50%	9.71%	1.75%	3.04%	0.36%	13.19%	2.18%

#### Appendix D: Long and Short Term Absence:

**Distribution of sickness type  
October 2011 - September 2012**

