

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CHIEF MINISTER
BY DEPUTY S. PITMAN OF ST. HELIER**

ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 1st DECEMBER 2009

Question

“Will the Minister provide a detailed breakdown, department-by-department for the types of illness underlying the sick days taken by public sector employees in both 2008 and for 2009 to date, such as stress, depression, flu, accident and so on and the total resultant cost in 2008 and 2009 to each department?”

Answer

Appendix A provides a detailed breakdown, by Department for the reasons underlying public sector employees' sickness absence for the calendar year 2008 and for the period ending 31 October 2009. This information is not available at individual department level where one department is made up of a number sub-departments, for example, Home Affairs and non-Ministerial. To collate the information at that level would be a significant piece of work and very time consuming.

All public sector employees' sickness absence is recorded on a central computer system, using standard absence reason codes, that have been agreed with the States of Jersey Occupational Health service and are similar to those used in local government in the UK. This classification of the causes of sickness absence allocates reasons for absence to the broader sickness absence categories to enable simpler recording.

The terms and conditions of service applied to our employees mean that that they work various working patterns and differing standard hours per day. Whilst absence is recorded in hours lost across the service, the information in Appendix A has been converted to show the number of days lost for each type of sickness. Please note that the figures for 2009 do not relate to a full year and the incidence of absence over the winter period is likely to be higher than at other times of the year. The Deputy will also note that in 2009 a unique code has been added to capture sickness as a result of Pandemic Flu. The impact of Pandemic Flu is expected to have affect absence levels for sickness and special leave for employees with caring responsibilities in the coming months

The Appendix shows that the top causes of absence for public sector employees to be due to musculoskeletal, stress/anxiety/depression, and respiratory conditions. The annual CIPD absence management survey published in June 2009 identified musculoskeletal, stress and acute medical conditions as the top causes for absence. A significant percentage of absence is also recorded as “miscellaneous”, this coding is frequently used for short term un-certificated absence where the illness is not clearly specified as well as where the employee would like to keep the reason for their absence confidential. Where a small number of days absence has been recorded for a particular sickness reason within a Ministry, it may be possible to identify an individual employee from the data. To protect the privacy of our employees, information relating to the actual days lost by reason has been calculated as a percentage of the total number of days lost for each sickness reason.

Relevant comparisons of absence within the UK Public sector workforce is difficult due to the range of occupations that are now operated outside of local government such as blue collar roles and the categories of sickness causes recorded. The table below provides comparison figures for the top causes of absence in the States of Jersey in 2008 and 2009 with the most recent figures published by the Local Government Employers Association for the period 2006/7. (Data for the period 2008/9 will not be published until 2010) Whilst the States of Jersey compares favourably with the % percentage days lost due to Musculoskeletal and Stress related absence in the UK local Government survey, the comparison is less helpful in respect of absence recorded as due to respiratory and miscellaneous reasons.

This is likely to be due to a difference in the absence categories used to classify and record absence causes.

Comparison of Causes of Sickness Absence.

Source :UK Local Government Employers Survey 2006/07 and the States of Jersey

	UK Local Government Employers Survey	States Of Jersey	States Of Jersey
Cause of absence and % of total days lost	2006/2007	2008	2009*
Back and neck problems/ Other musculoskeletal problems	22.5	22.4	23.3
Stress, depression, anxiety, mental health and fatigue	22.6	13.5	13.6
Chest, respiratory	5.8	15.1	16.5
Other, miscellaneous	14.8	27.8	26.0

Both the HR team and departmental management actively manage sickness throughout the States. The Occupational health service Annual report for 2008 recorded that the greatest number of referral to the service were in relation to musculoskeletal and psychological reasons. The States of Jersey operates a partial return to work scheme. This scheme enables an employee to safely return to work earlier than otherwise expected on a rehabilitation basis and under the guidance of the Occupational Health Department.

The department does not have the financial information available in the format requested. The total (actual) resultant costs of sickness absence in 2008 and 2009 to each Department is not available without an individual review of every employee who has been off work. This would be a significant piece of work and extremely time consuming. There are numerous pay groups with many different grades within each pay group, the system does not directly cost sickness against an individuals pay.

Furthermore resultant costs such as the cost of absence cover, or overtime, are not attributed directly to sickness absence. To provide accurate costs for sickness would require manual intervention and a separate calculation made against every employee.

APPENDIX A

Sickness Type						
	Cancer	Cardiovascular	Dermatological	Endocrine	Gastrointestinal	Gynaeco
2008						
Ministry	01	2	03	04	05	06
Chief Minister's	0.4%	0.5%		0.8%	2.5%	5.5%
Economic Development					0.6%	0.5%
Education, Sport & Culture	19.0%	11.8%	14.2%	12.5%	24.8%	38.3%
Health & Social Services	63.4%	18.4%	62.7%	75.5%	33.4%	36.8%
Home Affairs		0.8%	3.3%	7.4%	9.6%	5.6%
Housing			1.2%	0.8%	1.4%	
Jersey Airport	1.8%	3.5%	1.8%		3.3%	
Jersey Harbours	6.6%	4.6%	1.2%		2.7%	0.6%
Non Ministerial States Funded	6.6%				0.8%	0.6%
Planning and Environment		1.2%			0.9%	2.9%
Social Security	2.6%	0.3%			1.8%	0.4%
States Assembly			0.4%	2.3%	2.9%	0.2%
Transport and Technical Services		59.0%	14.2%	1.2%	1.8%	0.5%
Treasury and Resources			1.5%		4.8%	8.2%
2008 Total days lost by reason	1356	948	271	257	5090	1881
Percentage of total absence by reason	2.4%	1.7%	0.5%	0.5%	8.9%	3.3%
2009						
Ministry						
Chief Minister's	5.8%		4.2%	34.5%	2.7%	0.8%
Economic Development					1.9%	0.3%
Education, Sport & Culture	28.2%	55.2%	25.7%	32.2%	25.9%	39.0%
Health & Social Services	45.7%	21.7%	52.9%	2.3%	39.2%	49.8%
Home Affairs		1.8%	10.0%	6.9%	7.6%	2.3%
Housing	8.4%			6.9%	0.8%	0.2%
Jersey Airport	2.4%	2.2%	1.1%	13.8%	3.7%	
Jersey Harbours		2.5%			1.9%	
Non Ministerial States Funded	0.8%	0.6%	1.1%	4.6%	0.1%	0.5%
Planning and Environment					0.6%	0.3%
Social Security			0.4%		1.7%	0.2%
States Assembly	0.3%	0.4%			1.0%	
Transport and Technical Services	0.9%	4.2%	5.7%		6.9%	0.2%
Treasury and Resources		1.5%			5.7%	3.3%
2009 Total days lost by reason	1224	323	261	87	3762	1322
Percentage of total absence by reason	2.8%	0.7%	0.6%	0.2%	8.6%	3.0%
2008/ 2009						
Total days lost by reason	2580	1271	532	344	8852	3203
Overall Percentage of total absence by reason	2.6%	1.3%	0.5%	0.3%	8.8%	3.2%

* Please note that the number of days lost to the various reasons for absence have been presented as percentages of the total days lost for . This information protects the privacy of our employees as it may be possible to identify an individual from the actual number of days lost

**All percentages have been rounded to 1 decimal place