

PERFORMANCE AUDIT

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2000/2001

Benefits, Finance and Corporate issues
Comparing the performance of Scottish councils

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Introduction

Each year, councils publish a range of information to show people how well they are providing their services and how they compare with other councils.

This leaflet contains information on seven indicators relating to councils' benefits, finance and corporate indicators in 2000/2001 and how they compare with other councils. They are:

- housing and council tax benefit costs
- processing benefit applications
- council tax collection costs
- council tax collection
- payment of invoices
- employees sickness absenteeism levels
- equal opportunities.

Other pamphlets published by the Commission cover:

- Education services
- Environmental and Regulatory services
- Housing services
- Fire and Police services
- Leisure and Library services
- Social work services

The Commission also publishes:

- a comprehensive compendium of the information for all the services for which there are performance indicators
- council profiles analysing indicators on a council-by-council basis.

Using the information

For each activity we have set out why some of the differences in performance may have arisen. We also highlight particular features of the information – for example, the range in performance achieved by different councils or the overall change in councils' performance over time.

Several factors affect the way a council performs its activities. You need to be aware of these in order to understand why results may vary. Some of these factors are outwith the control of a council – for example, population size and density, geographical area, and the mix between urban and rural settlements. Others may be specific to a particular service or the groups of people it serves. These local factors may mean that a council with a performance which, at first sight, appears to be worse than that of another has, in fact, done better given the circumstances it faces.

In this pamphlet we have shown information for councils for 2000/2001, and where appropriate made comparison with previous years.

Some services were disrupted during 2000/2001 by strike action. The following councils have indicated that, for the services discussed in this pamphlet, their performance may have been affected.

Benefits administration

City of Edinburgh, East Dunbartonshire, Fife, Inverclyde, West Dunbartonshire

Finance

Argyll & Bute, City of Edinburgh, East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Eilean Siar, Fife, Inverclyde, North Ayrshire, Highland, West Dunbartonshire, West Lothian.

Corporate issues

West Dunbartonshire

Key

Auditors appointed by the Accounts Commission have reviewed authorities' arrangements for producing the performance information. In the tables shown in this pamphlet, an asterisk (*) against a council's name indicates that the auditor expressed doubts about the reliability of its arrangements for producing the information.

Indicator 1

Overall, the average cost per case for dealing with housing and council tax benefit claims was slightly over £41 which is an increase compared with the previous year (£39). The four councils with the highest percentage increases compared with the previous year were Dumfries & Galloway, East Dunbartonshire, Fife and Midlothian.

East Lothian, North Lanarkshire and South Ayrshire all reduced their cost per case by at least one-third compared with the previous year.

Indicator 2

The average time to process a new claim for housing or council tax benefit was 48 days, which varied significantly amongst councils from 15 days (South Lanarkshire) to 107 days (East Ayrshire).

Councils processed three out of every four renewal claims for benefits on time. These varied from 21% at East Lothian to 100% at South Lanarkshire. Over 95% of all benefit cases processed by council staff were calculated accurately, varying from 82% at West Lothian to over 99% at Shetland Islands and South Lanarkshire.

Indicator 3

Across Scotland, the average cost of collecting council tax per chargeable dwelling was £12.16, a slight increase (2.3%) compared with the previous year.

Moray, Perth & Kinross and Angus have reduced their costs year-on-year since 1996/97.

Indicator 4

Overall, councils collected 89.2% of council tax in 2000/2001, which is the highest percentage collected since 1996/97. There is significant variation amongst councils ranging from 79.6% (West Dunbartonshire) to 96.4% (Orkney Islands).

Five councils (Highland, Angus, Shetland Islands, Glasgow City and Renfrewshire) have increased their collection levels year-on-year since 1996/97.

Seven councils (Aberdeenshire, Clackmannanshire, Dundee City, Eilean Siar, Fife, Inverclyde and Moray) reported lower collection levels than those reported in 1996/97.

Indicator 5

Across Scotland, on average, 75% of the 4.7 million invoices sampled by councils were paid on time – an improvement compared with the two previous years. The percentage varied significantly from 50% at Fife to 89% at Highland.

Indicator 6

In 2000/2001, sickness absence for all groups of employees was 5.4%, or the equivalent of 12 days per employee per year, the same as the previous year. Seven councils (Aberdeen City, Fife, Inverclyde, North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire and West Dunbartonshire) reported sickness absence levels above 6%. Four councils (Eilean Siar, Moray, Scottish Borders and Shetland Islands) reported sickness absence levels below 4%.

Indicator 7

Across Scotland, councils reported that there were slightly fewer than 968 chief officials, of which 163 (17%) were women.

Overall, 23% of the 2,100 senior professionals reported by councils were women.

Women filled 46% of the 22,300 administrative and technical positions.

Almost 70% of the 177,000 clerical, manual and craft employees were women.

Sixty percent of the 7,000 head and deputy head teachers were women.

Seventy-seven percent of the 54,000 other teachers were women.

Indicator 1: Housing and council tax benefits costs

The gross administration cost per case for housing and council tax benefit.

This indicator shows the average administration cost in each council for dealing with housing and council tax benefit.

A council may choose to provide a high level of advice and counselling to claimants. The costs of such services will add to the cost to be reported in this indicator.

Points to bear in mind

Benefit claims may be more numerous or more complicated in areas where:

- there is a high proportion of applications from people who live at two or more addresses during the year
- there is a high proportion of applications from people in privately rented accommodation, where the application process is more complex
- there are more people in shared accommodation.

The cost per case may be affected by:

- the time taken to collect all the information needed to process a claim
- the allocation of overhead costs to this function, which should follow CIPFA guidance, may vary among councils.

Twelve councils have implemented the Department for Work and Pensions verification framework. In addition to the eight councils (Argyll & Bute, Clackmannanshire, Dumfries & Galloway, East Lothian, Inverclyde, North Lanarkshire, South Ayrshire and South Lanarkshire) that implemented the framework in previous years, a further four councils (Aberdeenshire, Falkirk, Scottish Borders and Stirling) implemented the framework in 2000/2001. Councils that are less well prepared to meet the minimum standards of the framework may experience higher benefits administration costs.

COMMENTARY

Thirty councils reported this information. Both Aberdeenshire and Eilean Siar failed to report the information for the second year in succession. There were almost one million council tax and housing benefit cases which is consistent with previous years.

Overall, the average cost per case was slightly over £41, an increase compared with the previous year (£39) (Table 1).

The cost per case varied from almost £24 (South Ayrshire) to almost £78 (City of Edinburgh). Eighteen of the thirty councils in 1999/2000 where comparison could be made reported increases in their gross administration cost per case compared to the last year. **The four councils with the highest percentage increases were Dumfries & Galloway (38%), East Dunbartonshire (50%), Fife (83%) and Midlothian (82%).**

Twelve councils reduced their cost per case. **East Lothian, North Lanarkshire and South Ayrshire all reduced their cost per case by at least one-third. All three councils also operate the verification framework.**

Table 1: Gross administration cost per case

	Number of council tax and housing benefit cases	Gross administration cost per case for housing and council tax benefit		
	2000/2001	2000/2001	1999/2000	1998/1999
Aberdeen City	34,944	51.26	49.77	44.64
Aberdeenshire	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	*40.43
Angus	18,698	48.74	44.64	25.26
Argyll & Bute	*12,558	*36.09	*42.79	25.34
Clackmannanshire	12,531	34.48	26.38	23.69
Dumfries & Galloway	19,836	54.93	39.81	20.92
Dundee City	*46,158	*36.49	*32.14	*27.09
East Ayrshire	28,375	47.61	40.72	28.03
East Dunbartonshire	8,870	47.26	31.51	37.20
East Lothian	21,132	35.91	58.77	Not reported
East Renfrewshire	9,825	46.91	51.18	97.39
Edinburgh, City of	71,249	77.67	78.53	58.99
Eilean Siar	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	24.28
Falkirk	26,545	32.09	*30.43	25.33
Fife	*85,048	*36.32	20.64	*57.43
Glasgow City	175,785	41.03	41.96	29.21
Highland	60,306	34.26	*34.61	*29.84
Inverclyde	17,792	36.02	37.54	26.87
Midlothian	11,656	65.28	*35.76	38.50
Moray	14,442	34.16	35.03	*19.96
North Ayrshire	22,374	45.95	44.45	29.48
North Lanarkshire	60,675	28.60	44.74	40.78
Orkney Islands	2,304	44.72	38.03	*42.20
Perth & Kinross	*17,550	*47.68	45.83	*32.01
Renfrewshire	43,129	24.78	28.24	23.53
Scottish Borders	24,378	36.89	37.67	36.09
Shetland Islands	4,887	42.30	40.32	38.70
South Ayrshire	*20,013	*23.79	44.63	47.57
South Lanarkshire	49,126	28.78	25.71	27.72
Stirling	11,858	58.28	*49.19	44.26
West Dunbartonshire	*22,879	*41.06	31.41	18.90
West Lothian	22,573	50.98	49.71	41.70
All Scotland	977,496	41.48	39.00	34.19

Indicator 2: Processing benefits applications and accuracy of calculating benefit

- The time to process benefit applications in calendar days
- The percentage of cases for which benefit due was calculated correctly.

This indicator shows the average time taken to process new claims and notifications of changes of circumstances, and the percentage of renewal claims that are processed on time. A new claim will normally take longer to process than a change of circumstance.

The time to process a claim is the period from the council receiving an application for benefit at any of its offices to the date of notifying the applicant of the outcome. This may include a period of time when an application for benefit is outwith a council's control, for example, when the application is returned to the applicant for additional information.

The indicator also shows the percentage of cases where council staff calculated the due benefit accurately.

Points to bear in mind

Councils have experienced significant changes over recent years in the information they require to report on benefits at a national level. These changes have required software solutions to be developed.

Councils that have significant backlogs of applications will report longer processing times. A consequence of longer processing times for benefits claims is that a council may have higher rent arrears.

Twelve councils have implemented the Department for Work and Pensions verification framework. In addition to the eight councils (Argyll & Bute, Clackmannanshire, Dumfries & Galloway, East Lothian, Inverclyde, North Lanarkshire, South Ayrshire and South Lanarkshire) that implemented the framework in previous years, a further four councils (Aberdeenshire, Falkirk, Scottish Borders and Stirling) implemented the framework in 2000/2001. Councils that are less well prepared to meet the minimum standards of the framework may experience higher benefits administration costs.

The indicator data for the accuracy of calculating benefit is based on a sample of randomly selected benefit cases spread across the year.

COMMENTARY

Processing new claims

In 2000/2001, the average time to process a new claim was 48 days, which varied significantly amongst councils from 15 days (South Lanarkshire) to 107 days (East Ayrshire). Seven councils processed their new benefit applications, on average, in less than 28 days (one month). Three councils (East Ayrshire, East Lothian and North Ayrshire) took longer than 91 days (three months), on average, to process claims (Table 2).

Processing change of circumstances

Across Scotland, the average time to process an application resulting from a change of circumstances was 22 days. This varied significantly from four days at Highland, Orkney Islands and Shetland Islands to 76 days at East Ayrshire. Fourteen of the 29 councils that reported this information took, on average, less than 14 days to process these changes, while two councils (Dundee City and East Ayrshire) took longer than 70 days.

Processing renewal claims

Three out of every four renewal claims which were due to be processed before the new benefit period began were processed on time. These varied from 21% at East Lothian to 100% at South Lanarkshire. Seven councils processed over 90% on time, while three councils (East Lothian, Midlothian and North Lanarkshire) processed less than 50% on time.

Accuracy of calculating benefit

Twenty-six of the 32 councils reported this information, and **over 95% of all benefit cases processed by council staff were calculated accurately.** These varied from 82% at West Lothian to over 99% at Shetland Islands and South Lanarkshire (Table 2). Six councils (Aberdeenshire, Clackmannanshire, Dundee City, East Lothian, Eilean Siar and Moray) did not report the information.

Table 2: Processing benefits applications – 2000/2001

	Average time to process new claims (days)	Average time to process change of circumstances (days)	Percentage of renewal claims processed on time	Percentage of cases for which the calculation of the amount of benefit due was correct
Aberdeen City	31	16	86.0	99.0
Aberdeenshire	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported
Angus	46	13	77.3	97.0
Argyll & Bute*	34	10	55.2	91.1
Clackmannanshire	24	9	91.9	Not reported
Dumfries & Galloway	*51	11	69.3	99.0
Dundee City*	54	72	95.0	Not reported
East Ayrshire	107	76	59.6	91.2
East Dunbartonshire	50	8	77.9	97.0
East Lothian	95	52	21.5	Not reported
East Renfrewshire	26	13	90.1	97.6
Edinburgh, City of	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	94.7
Eilean Siar	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported
Falkirk	29	11	75.6	95.8
Fife	*31	15	96.2	92.3
Glasgow City*	45	23	81.0	96.7
Highland	36	4	71.6	97.0
Inverclyde	76	13	55.8	92.1
Midlothian	67	20	37.0	91.7
Moray	44	41	73.4	Not reported
North Ayrshire	98	17	75.9	97.0
North Lanarkshire	45	13	48.4	94.6
Orkney Islands	20	4	78.2	98.7
Perth & Kinross	19	*60	*68.1	90.0
Renfrewshire	32	17	91.1	94.5
Scottish Borders	35	10	87.4	96.8
Shetland Islands	26	4	98.0	99.8
South Ayrshire	68	26	62.6	91.4
South Lanarkshire	15	8	100.0	99.7
Stirling	29	17	66.7	94.7
West Dunbartonshire	73	15	63.1	98.0
West Lothian	24	16	67.3	82.1
All Scotland	48	22	75.0	95.8

Indicator 3: Council tax collection costs

The cost of collecting council tax per chargeable dwelling.

This indicator shows the average cost per dwelling of collecting council tax. It excludes costs associated with the collection of non-domestic rates and residual community charge.

Points to bear in mind

The cost of collection may be affected by:

- the ability and willingness of taxpayers to pay
- the level of enforcement action taken by the council to recover tax due to it
- how efficient the council is at collecting the tax
- the allocation of overhead costs to this function, which should follow CIPFA guidance, may vary among councils.

The cost includes the net cost of collecting water and sewerage charges on behalf of the water authorities and, therefore, any profit or loss on collecting water and sewerage charges will affect this indicator.

The Commission's report, '*Council tax collection*', (February 1998) recommended that the priority for most councils should be to increase collection levels, before considering reducing costs.

The Commission has grouped councils into 'families' which take account of the main factors outwith their control and allow more of a like-for-like comparison. These groupings were used in '*Council tax collection*', where more information on them can be found.

COMMENTARY

In 2000/2001, across Scotland, the average cost of collecting council tax per chargeable dwelling was £12.16 which was a slight increase (2.3%) compared with the previous year.

Overall, thirteen councils reduced the cost of collection per chargeable dwelling. The range in costs varied amongst councils and within the following groupings of councils.

Group A

Nine of the 13 councils within this group reported an increase in their cost per dwelling compared with the previous year. Moray, Perth & Kinross and Angus have reduced their costs year-on-year since 1996/97.

Only two councils (Dumfries & Galloway and Scottish Borders) were below the national average (Table 3).

Group B

Four of the ten councils (East Dunbartonshire, Falkirk, Stirling and North Ayrshire) reduced their cost per dwelling compared with the previous year. Six councils had collection costs below the all-Scotland average figure.

Group C

Five of the nine councils (Edinburgh City, Inverclyde, North Lanarkshire, Dundee City and West Dunbartonshire) reduced their cost of collection compared with the previous year. Four councils reported costs below the all-Scotland average.

Table 3: Cost of collecting council tax per chargeable dwelling

	2000/2001 £	1999/2000 £	1998/1999 £	1997/1998 £	1996/1997 £
FAMILY A					
Dumfries & Galloway	8.99	9.09	8.01	8.80	11.14
Scottish Borders	10.75	9.84	7.33	7.02	7.45
Aberdeenshire	12.26	11.77	11.32	11.70	11.78
Perth & Kinross	13.53	14.60	14.79	15.71	17.27
Moray	13.60	13.72	14.81	17.39	17.54
East Lothian	14.08	8.96	11.34	10.23	* 8.05
Midlothian	14.11	* 3.27	2.51	0.57	10.80
Angus	14.44	15.64	15.92	17.04	23.67
Highland	14.87	13.88	11.32	10.76	20.44
Shetland Islands	16.52	15.48	15.91	14.16	16.99
Argyll & Bute	16.89	12.98	10.48	9.20	6.17
Orkney Islands	17.22	17.16	19.07	19.65	20.70
Eilean Siar	21.99	21.29	21.29	23.97	24.65
FAMILY B					
East Dunbartonshire	4.38	5.16	4.59	4.55	8.17
Falkirk	7.23	7.97	2.96	4.61	11.60
West Lothian	7.69	7.55	4.84	3.08	1.51
Fife	10.58	9.73	14.64	8.80	4.58
East Renfrewshire	10.79	9.66	11.22	8.18	9.33
North Ayrshire	11.19	16.24	16.03	15.89	17.51
Stirling	12.36	13.70	8.69	11.87	13.92
Clackmannanshire	12.90	10.75	9.84	8.38	Not reported
East Ayrshire	13.44	12.95	10.43	6.07	8.41
South Ayrshire	14.70	13.19	13.15	10.38	8.55
FAMILY C					
Edinburgh, City of	8.56	8.57	6.39	3.29	4.39
Inverclyde	10.01	12.67	12.48	7.15	14.24
South Lanarkshire	11.65	11.09	9.92	10.83	11.62
Renfrewshire	11.87	11.68	12.57	12.78	12.99
North Lanarkshire	13.33	13.77	13.08	7.26	* 9.60
Dundee City	13.39	15.52	13.97	15.48	28.94
Glasgow City	13.62	13.12	12.07	12.36	12.44
Aberdeen City	14.67	13.83	13.04	15.01	15.67
West Dunbartonshire	19.41	20.41	13.51	12.63	* 9.38
All Scotland	12.16	11.88	11.05	10.01	12.13

Indicator 4: Council tax collection

The percentage of council tax, excluding reliefs and rebates, due in the year, collected by the end of the year.

This indicator shows the proportion of council tax due in the financial year that was collected by 31 March 2001. This is a measure of how effective councils are at collecting the council tax due to them.

Collection levels exclude the amount a council awards to people who receive council tax benefits.

Points to bear in mind

The variation in collection levels of council tax between councils can be explained in part by factors such as social deprivation and population density, which are mainly outwith their control. However, other factors – such as the accuracy of records and the speed with which recovery procedures are initiated – are directly within councils' control.

The Commission has grouped councils into 'families' which take account of the main factors outwith their control and allow more of a like-for-like comparison. These groupings were used in the Commission's report '*Council tax collection*', where more information on them can be found.

COMMENTARY

In 2000/2001, the net amount of council tax billed amounted to £1.34 billion compared with £1.26 billion for 1999/2000. Despite strike action at a number of councils across Scotland, the overall amount of council tax collected during the year increased. Only six councils (Eilean Siar, Moray, Fife, West Dunbartonshire, Inverclyde and Dundee City) reported lower collection levels compared with the previous year (Table 4).

Overall, councils collected 89.2% of council tax, which is the highest percentage collected since 1996/97.

Although collection levels are showing a gradual increase there is significant variation amongst councils ranging from 79.6% (West Dunbartonshire) to 96.4% (Orkney Islands).

Many councils have made significant progress and shown continuous improvement in their collection levels. **Five councils (Highland, Angus, Shetland Islands, Glasgow City and Renfrewshire) have increased their collection levels year-on-year since 1996/97.**

In 2000/2001, **seven councils (Aberdeenshire, Clackmannanshire, Dundee City, Eilean Siar, Fife, Inverclyde and Moray) reported lower collection levels than those reported in 1996/97** when directly comparable information was first available.

Table 4: Percentage of income due from council tax for the year that was received by the end of the year

	2000/2001	1999/2000	1998/1999	1997/1998	1996/1997
FAMILY A					
Eilean Siar	87.8	89.7	90.1	89.6	88.3
Highland	91.4	91.1	90.1	89.1	85.1
Midlothian	91.5	90.7	88.6	87.8	88.0
Argyll & Bute	91.8	90.1	88.3	89.7	88.2
Moray	92.3	92.9	91.0	92.4	92.6
East Lothian	92.4	90.8	87.2	85.8	88.2
Aberdeenshire	93.2	91.8	94.2	94.2	94.7
Dumfries & Galloway	93.5	92.0	88.1	90.8	91.0
Perth & Kinross	93.5	92.1	93.1	92.6	92.8
Angus	93.9	93.6	93.5	93.3	91.9
Shetland Islands	95.2	94.5	94.3	93.8	92.3
Scottish Borders	95.7	95.7	95.2	94.6	95.1
Orkney Islands	96.4	96.3	96.1	95.9	96.0
FAMILY B					
East Ayrshire	85.3	83.2	81.8	83.6	82.6
North Ayrshire	87.2	85.2	83.8	85.4	84.8
Clackmannanshire	88.5	86.7	86.6	83.5	89.6
Fife	89.2	90.4	91.8	91.4	91.0
West Lothian	90.3	88.5	84.3	88.2	87.7
East Dunbartonshire	91.0	91.0	90.0	92.1	91.0
Falkirk	93.1	92.3	91.6	90.0	92.2
South Ayrshire	93.3	91.5	88.2	89.9	89.3
East Renfrewshire	93.5	93.3	91.2	93.1	93.3
Stirling	93.9	93.7	92.1	90.5	92.7
FAMILY C					
West Dunbartonshire	79.6	80.4	76.6	79.8	77.0
Glasgow City	80.1	78.9	77.3	75.0	73.7
Inverclyde	80.3	81.3	77.2	80.8	83.8
Dundee City	85.0	86.6	87.3	85.5	85.5
North Lanarkshire	87.9	86.2	83.8	85.7	83.0
Edinburgh, City of	88.1	88.1	87.7	87.1	87.6
Aberdeen City	89.9	89.7	89.6	89.7	89.8
Renfrewshire	91.0	89.4	87.4	85.4	84.9
South Lanarkshire	93.2	87.9	87.1	88.7	85.2
All Scotland	89.2	88.3	87.2	87.3	86.8

Indicator 5: Payment of invoices

The number of invoices paid within 30 days of receipt, or agreed time limit if otherwise specified, as a percentage of all invoices paid.

This indicator shows the percentage of invoices paid by councils within 30 calendar days (or otherwise agreed time period). Thirty calendar days reflects the normal credit period.

Points to bear in mind

Some invoices will not be paid within the agreed term because they are disputed.

All councils calculated this indicator on a statistically valid sample of invoices.

A number of councils make some payments through credit card companies and it is each council's responsibility to ensure the credit card companies makes payment within 30 calendar days.

COMMENTARY

Across Scotland, on average, 75% of the 4.7 million invoices sampled by councils were paid on time. This represents an improvement compared with the two previous years (Table 5). There continues, however, to be significant variation amongst councils on the percentage paid on time. In 2000/2001, **the percentage paid on time varied from 50% at Fife to 89% at Highland.** Twelve councils paid over 80% of invoices on time compared with six councils in the previous year. Fife, North Lanarkshire and South Lanarkshire were the only councils to fail to pay at least 70% of invoices on time.

Twenty-four councils equalled or improved the percentage of invoices paid on time compared with the previous year, while eleven councils have improved their performance year-on-year since the indicator was first introduced in 1997/98.

Table 5: Percentage of invoices sampled paid within 30 days or other agreed time period

	Percentage of invoices paid within 30 days or other agreed time period		
	2000/2001	1999/2000	1998/1999
Aberdeen City	83	79	74
Aberdeenshire	79	75	71
Angus	77	76	80
Argyll & Bute	79	77	70
Clackmannanshire	72	79	80
Dumfries & Galloway	88	86	81
Dundee City	88	*94	82
East Ayrshire	76	77	73
East Dunbartonshire	70	62	63
East Lothian	76	69	82
East Renfrewshire	75	77	82
Edinburgh, City of	72	70	65
Eilean Siar	77	79	81
Falkirk	87	76	75
Fife	50	58	44
Glasgow City	83	76	72
Highland	89	88	71
Inverclyde	73	48	50
Midlothian	75	70	62
Moray	83	80	72
North Ayrshire	85	84	86
North Lanarkshire	66	64	69
Orkney Islands	83	83	83
Perth & Kinross	86	75	70
Renfrewshire	77	75	70
Scottish Borders	75	77	68
Shetland Islands	83	78	74
South Ayrshire	79	76	72
South Lanarkshire	63	44	52
Stirling	77	74	60
West Dunbartonshire	76	76	59
West Lothian	83	77	62
All Scotland	75	72	68

Indicator 6: Sickness absence levels

Proportion of working time lost due to sickness absence for:

- chief officers, administrative, professional, technical and clerical employees
- craft and manual employees
- teachers.

This indicator reports the amount of time lost through sickness absence for council staff. The employee groupings reflect the broad differences in the type of work undertaken.

Sickness absence includes self certification, absence supported by a doctor's certificate, long-term sickness absence, and industrial injury. It does not include compassionate leave, career leave and special leave/unpaid leave nor maternity or paternity leave.

Points to bear in mind

The information covers all staff directly employed by the council, which includes full-time, part-time and temporary staff and the council's direct labour organisation(s).

The indicator excludes police and fire employees who are included in the pamphlet covering fire and police services.

Working patterns vary both between and within councils. For the purposes of this indicator each period of work, for example, day shift or night shift counts as a working day.

COMMENTARY

Across Scotland in 2000/2001, sickness absence for all groups of employees was 5.4%, or the equivalent of 12 days per employee per year, the same as the previous year. Seven councils (Aberdeen City, Fife, Inverclyde, North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire and West Dunbartonshire) reported sickness absence levels above 6%. Four councils (Eilean Siar, Moray, Scottish Borders and Shetland Islands) reported sickness absence levels below 4% (Table 6a).

The performance of each council is reported here within the employee groups.

Chief officers, administrative, professional, technical and clerical employees

Overall, sickness absence for this group of employees was 5.2%, which is an increase compared with the previous year (4.9%). Sixteen councils reported an increase in sickness absence compared with the previous year. There was significant variation amongst councils ranging from 2.3% (equivalent to five days per employee) at Eilean Siar to 6.7% (equivalent to 15 days per employee) at West Dunbartonshire. The councils with the highest level of sickness absence (Fife, North Lanarkshire and West Dunbartonshire) all reported sickness absence above 6% (13 days per employee) (Table 6b).

Craft and manual employees

Across Scotland for this group of employees, 6.4% of time was lost due to sickness absence, which represents an improvement compared with the previous year (6.7%). There is, however, significant variation amongst councils ranging from 2.7% (equivalent to six days per employee) at Eilean Siar to 8.8% (equivalent to 20 days per employee) at Inverclyde. Seventeen councils reduced the percentage of time lost to sickness absence. Four councils (East Dunbartonshire, Inverclyde, North Ayrshire and North Lanarkshire) reported sickness absence of 8% (18 days per employee) or more.

Teachers

Overall, 3.9% (equivalent to seven days per employee) of teachers' time was lost due to sickness absence, the same as the previous year. Five councils (Clackmannanshire, Dundee City, East Lothian, South Ayrshire and West Dunbartonshire) all reported sickness absence of 5% (equivalent to ten days) or more. The three island councils (Eilean Siar, Orkney Islands and Shetlands Islands) along with Highland all reported sickness absence below 3% (equivalent to six days).

Table 6a: Percentage of days lost due to sickness absence for all council employees

	All employees	
	2000/2001	1999/2000
Aberdeen City	6.2	6.2
Aberdeenshire	5.2	*5.2
Angus	4.1	4.7
Argyll & Bute	4.4	4.7
Clackmannanshire	6.0	*5.2
Dumfries & Galloway	4.4	4.4
Dundee City	4.9	5.1
East Ayrshire	5.7	5.3
East Dunbartonshire	5.7	6.2
East Lothian	5.9	5.4
East Renfrewshire	4.3	4.6
Edinburgh, City of	5.1	5.2
Eilean Siar	2.5	2.7
Falkirk	5.0	5.6
Fife	6.4	5.9
Glasgow City	5.5	4.9
Highland	* 4.4	*4.1
Inverclyde	6.3	6.2
Midlothian	5.0	5.4
Moray	3.4	*4.2
North Ayrshire	6.3	6.5
North Lanarkshire	* 6.3	*7.1
Orkney Islands	4.0	*3.3
Perth & Kinross	4.9	5.0
Renfrewshire	6.2	6.0
Scottish Borders	3.7	*3.4
Shetland Islands	3.8	3.8
South Ayrshire	5.8	5.4
South Lanarkshire	5.0	5.5
Stirling	4.9	5.3
West Dunbartonshire	6.7	6.9
West Lothian	5.4	5.2
All Scotland	5.4	5.4

Table 6b: Percentage of days lost due to sickness for the following categories

	Chief officers, administrative, professional, technical and clerical employees		Craft and manual employees		Teachers	
	2000/2001	1999/2000	2000/2001	1999/2000	2000/2001	1999/2000
Aberdeen City	5.4	5.5	7.8	7.6	4.1	4.5
Aberdeenshire	5.5	* 5.2	6.2	* 6.6	3.2	* 3.3
Angus	4.0	4.3	5.1	6.7	3.7	3.7
Argyll & Bute	4.5	4.2	5.1	5.9	3.2	3.3
Clackmannanshire	5.5	* 4.9	7.2	* 6.8	5.5	* 3.8
Dumfries & Galloway	4.1	4.1	5.1	4.6	3.9	4.5
Dundee City	4.7	4.7	5.4	6.3	5.0	4.6
East Ayrshire	5.7	5.0	6.6	6.2	4.2	4.3
East Dunbartonshire	5.4	5.2	8.1	9.9	4.1	3.7
East Lothian	5.6	4.7	6.8	5.9	5.0	5.8
East Renfrewshire	4.2	4.4	5.4	5.2	3.3	4.1
Edinburgh, City of	5.1	4.7	6.3	7.0	3.2	3.2
Eilean Siar	2.3	3.1	2.7	2.3	2.3	2.8
Falkirk	5.0	5.7	5.7	6.3	3.8	3.8
Fife	6.1	5.2	7.5	7.5	4.7	3.5
Glasgow City	5.5	4.7	6.2	6.0	4.0	3.1
Highland	* 4.9	* 3.8	* 5.2	* 5.3	* 2.5	* 3.4
Inverclyde	4.6	5.1	8.8	8.1	4.9	4.7
Midlothian	4.4	4.7	6.1	7.3	3.6	3.1
Moray	3.5	* 5.5	2.9	* 4.0	4.0	* 3.1
North Ayrshire	5.4	5.6	8.4	8.7	4.6	4.1
North Lanarkshire	* 6.2	* 5.8	* 8.0	* 9.4	* 4.4	* 4.8
Orkney Islands	4.5	* 3.3	4.3	* 4.9	2.6	* 1.8
Perth & Kinross	4.9	4.3	7.8	7.4	3.4	4.7
Renfrewshire	5.9	6.1	7.6	7.3	4.6	3.8
Scottish Borders	4.0	* 3.5	3.4	* 3.5	3.2	* 3.2
Shetland Islands	3.4	3.6	4.6	4.6	2.8	2.7
South Ayrshire	5.0	4.8	6.9	6.8	5.3	4.1
South Lanarkshire	4.8	5.4	5.9	6.2	3.6	4.2
Stirling	4.9	5.0	5.6	6.0	4.0	4.5
West Dunbartonshire	6.7	6.1	7.4	7.9	5.5	6.8
West Lothian	4.9	5.1	7.0	6.4	4.0	3.4
All Scotland	5.2	4.9	6.4	6.7	3.9	3.9

Indicator 7: Equal opportunities policy

The proportion of employees within the council who are women.

Councils' employment policy should reflect their commitment to equal opportunities. This indicator shows the current gender balance in employment and provides an indication of where there is under or over representation at the various levels of management.

The indicator covers the proportion of women employees at the following levels:

- chief official
- senior professional
- administrative and technical
- all other employees including clerical, manual and craft
- head and deputy head teacher
- all other teachers.

Points to bear in mind

The indicator reports the actual number of employees employed by councils at September each year; it is not the full-time equivalents.

The generic headings given to the groupings of employees mentioned above provide a broad indication of the employees included in each group.

Employees groupings relate to local authority administrative, professional, technical and clerical grades and in 2000/2001 were defined as being at the following salary levels:

- chief official grades
- senior professionals over £33,000
- administrative and technical between £20,000 and £33,000
- all other employees up to £20,000
- head and deputy head teachers over £33,000
- all other teachers below £33,000.

COMMENTARY

Overall, councils reported that women filled 68% of all local authority jobs. However, wide variation exists amongst councils. The following sets out the percentage of women at the different levels of management.

Chief officials

Across Scotland, councils reported that there were 968 chief officials of which 163 (17%) were women. However, there is significant variation amongst councils ranging from no women chief officials at Midlothian to over 40% at Falkirk. Four councils, Aberdeenshire, Eilean Siar, Highland and Midlothian, all reported fewer than 10% chief officials were women. Seven councils reported that 25% or more of their chief officials were women (Table 7a).

Senior professionals

Overall, 23% of the 2,100 senior professionals reported by councils were women. There is, however, wide variation across councils in the percentages of women in this group, ranging from no women at Orkney Islands to over 60% at West Dunbartonshire. Eighteen councils reported that less than 25% of senior professionals were women.

Administrative and technical

Women fill 46% of the 22,300 administrative and technical positions. This varied amongst councils from slightly under 27% at Orkney Islands to over 57% at West Dunbartonshire. Twenty-seven councils reported that more than 40% of administrative and technical employees were women.

All other employees, including clerical, manual and craft

Across Scotland, almost 70% of the 177,000 clerical, manual and craft employees were women. All 32 councils reported that between 60% and 80% of these jobs were filled by women.

Head and deputy head teachers

Sixty-seven percent of the 6,300 head and deputy head teachers were women. There was a significant variation in the percentages reported by councils ranging from 43% at Shetland Islands to 87% at East Dunbartonshire (Table 7b).

All other teachers

Seventy-six percent of the 54,300 teachers in this grouping were women. The variation in the proportion of women teachers reported by councils ranged from 69% at Stirling to 86% at East Dunbartonshire. Twenty-eight councils reported that between 70% and 80% of these teachers posts were women employees.

Table 7a: The percentage of staff who were women (excluding teachers) – 2000/2001

	Chief officials	Senior professionals	Administrative and technical	All other staff, including clerical, manual and craft	Total employees
Aberdeen City	13.7	20.6	54.9	69.6	9,250
Aberdeenshire	5.4	16.7	47.6	78.9	8,997
Angus	10.2	31.1	43.8	73.7	3,327
Argyll & Bute	12.9	28.6	43.2	71.7	4,037
Clackmannanshire	21.1	25.5	45.2	70.1	1,968
Dumfries & Galloway	10.0	11.5	39.0	74.5	5,558
Dundee City	25.0	24.4	46.5	61.2	6,095
East Ayrshire	14.8	10.8	46.7	70.8	4,596
East Dunbartonshire*	26.7	31.4	46.2	64.3	2,472
East Lothian	15.0	24.1	50.6	71.3	3,328
East Renfrewshire	28.1	26.9	47.2	73.3	2,668
Edinburgh, City of	20.0	20.8	52.1	70.3	15,323
Eilean Siar	4.2		30.5	79.2	2,157
Falkirk	41.7	33.3	50.1	73.4	5,560
Fife	10.6	29.1	46.9	71.0	15,850
Glasgow City	11.4	17.6	44.5	61.5	29,197
Highland	4.8	9.9	37.5	64.0	5,972
Inverclyde	17.1	25.0	48.5	71.6	3,732
Midlothian	0.0	14.0	49.9	72.7	3,371
Moray	25.0	14.3	47.6	77.0	3,647
North Ayrshire	19.0	11.4	46.8	71.6	5,077
North Lanarkshire	20.0	28.4	45.6	70.2	13,080
Orkney Islands	14.3	0.0	26.7	64.2	1,071
Perth & Kinross	13.5	23.1	49.8	72.3	3,227
Renfrewshire	24.3	21.0	42.5	70.0	6,626
Scottish Borders	11.4	7.1	43.3	69.5	3,834
Shetland Islands	14.3	16.7	32.7	70.0	2,525
South Ayrshire	15.6	31.4	40.9	69.9	4,799
South Lanarkshire	22.2	27.5	45.6	67.1	11,905
Stirling	34.4	31.3	54.3	65.5	3,238
West Dunbartonshire	33.3	60.7	57.1	70.0	4,273
West Lothian	17.4	20.7	50.6	72.1	5,288
All Scotland	16.8	22.7	46.6	69.3	202,048

Eilean Siar reported no employees at senior professional level.

Table 7b: Percentage of teachers who were women – 2000/2001

	Head and deputy head teachers	All other teachers	Total number of all teachers
Aberdeen City	52.9	81.1	2,346
Aberdeenshire	67.7	76.2	2,818
Angus	57.0	77.1	1,361
Argyll & Bute	68.5	76.1	1,143
Clackmannanshire	64.9	78.8	514
Dumfries & Galloway	54.8	74.5	2,066
Dundee City	58.3	76.6	1,782
East Ayrshire	71.9	73.0	1,432
East Dunbartonshire*	87.0	85.8	1,265
East Lothian	66.7	77.7	1,101
East Renfrewshire	76.1	78.0	1,165
Edinburgh, City of	62.1	74.9	3,921
Eilean Siar	51.0	72.1	446
Falkirk	74.5	76.4	1,708
Fife	71.5	74.8	3,885
Glasgow City	73.1	76.9	6,588
Highland	63.0	74.2	2,660
Inverclyde	81.5	73.5	1,086
Midlothian	68.1	76.3	1,003
Moray	61.4	76.8	1,132
North Ayrshire	67.6	70.1	1,521
North Lanarkshire	69.7	73.2	4,376
Orkney Islands	63.0	71.6	305
Perth & Kinross	62.4	78.2	1,476
Renfrewshire	71.4	75.3	2,035
Scottish Borders	65.3	74.8	1,268
Shetland Islands	43.2	74.0	480
South Ayrshire	59.7	76.3	1,783
South Lanarkshire	64.0	81.2	3,912
Stirling	77.9	68.8	754
West Dunbartonshire	61.4	75.5	1,340
West Lothian	76.7	77.4	1,916
All Scotland	67.1	76.0	60,588

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If you have any specific queries about the performance information, you may wish to contact your council. A contact person for each council is given below. If you have general queries about this pamphlet, you may wish to contact Alec Taylor or Jim Lakie at Audit Scotland (see back cover).

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