



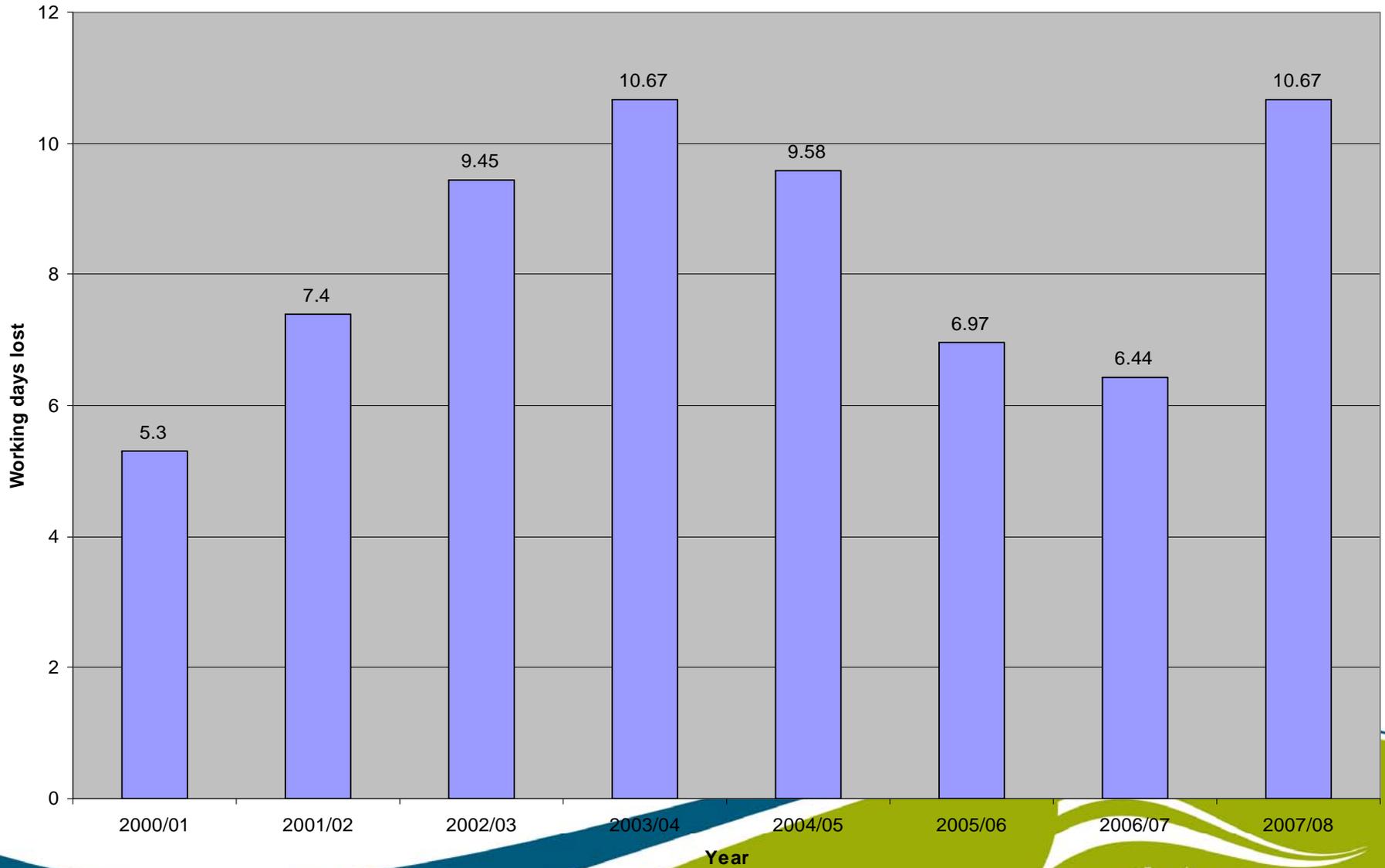
WHY ABSENCE MATTERS

Why Absence Matters - the figures

- 4.4% average in local government.
- 4.21% North Devon Council.
- 10.1 working days lost per employee, per year* in local government.
- 10.67 days lost per employer, per year at North Devon Council.

*According to CIPD (2008)

Working days lost due to sickness 2000-2008



How sickness absence is managed at North Devon Council:

Background:

From April 2000 - April 2001 our monitoring showed a dramatic increase from an average of 5.5 working days lost due to sickness absence to 7.2 days.

This continued to increase to 9.2 days.

- The main reasons were stress and flu;
- Costing £31,000 over the year.

ACTION

- Consultant to investigate by interviewing employees who had been absent due to stress and those who had high levels of sickness absence.
- Supported by the Trade Union, Politicians/Senior Management.

Findings

- 66% of those interviewed felt that work had contributed to their ill health.
- Employees felt isolated.
- Objectives were not prioritised so employees felt that they had to do everything.
- Absence was inconsistently managed.
- Managers were in need of development regarding people management/absence management.
- There was a long - hour culture.
- Lack of corporate visibility.

Action Planning

- An action plan was developed and agreed with politicians, Trade Unions Senior management.
- Management training covering absence management, performance management, stress management/risk assessment, teamwork, appraisals, target setting, delegation and time management.
- Increased management accountability for the management of employee time to manage long hours culture.

Action Planning Continued

- Corporate maximum times were put into place so that hours did not build up.
- Stress awareness training.
- Introduced Business Planning.
- Trigger letters to offer stress counselling.
- Return to work interviews.
- Long Term Sickness Absence Policy triggering Occupational Health involvement.
- Work with Occupational Health to manage absence and return to work.
- Reasonable adjustment.

- Work related stress is no longer the biggest reason for sickness absence and in 2007/08 the figures for sickness absence were:
- 6.5 working days lost due to sickness absence.

Sickness Absence - An Ongoing Issue

- Our recent statistics show a dramatic increase again.
- A sickness absence strategy has been developed and I am now working through the process again.



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