



WALES AUDIT OFFICE  
SWYDDFA ARCHWILIO CYMRU

Wales Audit Office / Swyddfa Archwilio Cymru  
2-4 Park Grove  
Cardiff / Caerdydd CF10 3PA  
Direct Tel / Ffôn: 029 20 262 641  
e-mail / e-bost: jeremy.colman@wao.gov.uk  
PA / CP: Fiona Bashford, fiona.bashford@wao.gov.uk  
www.wao.gov.uk



**JEREMY COLMAN, AUDITOR GENERAL FOR WALES / ARCHWILYDD CYFFREDINOL CYMRU**

Ms Janet Davies AM  
Chair of the Audit Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff CF99 1NA

Date 20<sup>th</sup> December 2005  
Our reference JC/0159/fgb  
Your reference  
Tel No 029 20 262641  
Fax No 029 20 262631  
E-mail jeremy.colman@wao.gov.uk  
Pages 1 of 2

Dee Chair,

## **AUDIT COMMITTEE REPORT ON THE MANAGEMENT OF SICKNESS ABSENCE IN FURTHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN WALES**

The Clerk's letter of 14 December requested my advice on the Welsh Assembly Government's response to the recommendations made by the Audit Committee in its report *The Management of Sickness Absence by Further Education Institutions in Wales*.

The Welsh Assembly Government response is positive, stating that it has accepted all seven of the Committee's recommendations.

In particular, the Government reports that ELWa is working with *fforwm* (the representative organisation for the further education sector in Wales) to gain institutions' agreement on the definition and basis of calculation of absence. As the Committee's report made clear, the availability of robust, comparable data is an essential basis on which to develop better systems for management. The other significant development is the guidance that ELWa intends to issue to institutions in December 2005 covering all the areas flagged as important by the Committee in its recommendations: the roles of Boards and senior management; stress-related absence; target setting; management information and trend analysis; the key role of properly-trained line managers; and occupational health services. ELWa plans to discuss this guidance with *fforwm* in the New Year, and we, too, shall be given the opportunity to comment on it before it is finalised.

Our reference: JC/0159/tgb

Page 2 of 2

Your reference:

Date: 20<sup>th</sup> December 2005

---

It is welcome to note that, although managing sickness absence is primarily a matter for local management, as the provider of the majority of further education institutions funding, ELWa has decided to grip the issue. In addition to the steps outlined above, together with *fforwm* ELWa is also arranging sector-wide training events for senior managers by July 2006.

Against this background, there is no need for the Committee to take further action now. In view of the current high profile of sickness absence management – exemplified by, for example, my current study on this topic in the National Assembly which I shall publish in 2006 – we will continue to monitor the progress made by further education institutions in Wales and ELWa in implementing the Committee's recommendations and improving the management of sickness absence. We will draw to the Committee's attention any areas where we consider that further action by the Committee is merited.

I hope that you find this response helpful.

*Yours sincerely*

*Jeremy Colman*

**Jeremy Colman**  
**Auditor General for Wales**