Dear Mr Newman,

Thank you for your request under the Freedom of Information Act received on 13th March 2012..
You asked:-

For the past 3 full accounting years in DWP, please provide:
1) The number of man-hours (excl. Holidays) lost through:
   a. Sickness
   b. Authorised absenteeism
   c. Unauthorised absenteeism
   d. In total

2) What these figures represent as a % of total hours.

3) The number of individuals that have contributed to the hours in
   a) to d) above

4) The number of individuals that have incurred no absenteeism at
   all and what this represents as a %.

The Department is unable to answer your questions on this occasion as to do so would exceed cost limits. An appropriate cost limit has been specified in regulations for answering Freedom of Information requests and for central Government and it is set at £600. This represents the estimated cost of one person spending 3½ working days in determining whether the Department holds the information, and locating, retrieving and extracting the information. Under section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act the Department is not obliged to comply with this part of your request.

However I do want to attempt to explain to you why I am unable to respond to this request and I would also like to direct you to some information which I hope may be helpful to you.

To answer your questions, relating to absence figures in man hours, requires a substantial amount of clerical work to manipulate existing data sources to provide the information you have requested because we do not record absences in this way.

In relation to Question 1, The Department currently employs over 100,000 staff and the Department standard is to report sickness in working days lost rather than in man hours.

- o Sickness data is readily available via current recognised data sources. We have inserted a link to the Business Plan Quarterly Data Summary which contains the most recently published sickness absence figures (September 2011) for your reference below:

  http://www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/corporate-publications/dwp-business-plan-2011-2015/business-plan-quarterly-data/

- o For item b) & c) the data would be sourced from Departmental personnel computer records and could be counted in calendar or working days (i.e. excluding weekends) but does not take in to account individual daily working patterns. For example someone could take 6 months maternity leave which would have a start and end date to calculate 183 days, however they may have a two day a week working pattern, so the actual days absent would be 52 days! We would also have to identify all joiners and leavers throughout the three year period. This would exceed the estimated cost of one person spending 3½ working days in determining whether the Department holds the information, and locating, retrieving and extracting the information.

- o Questions 2, 3 & 4 would be not be able to be answered without first obtaining the data for Question 1

If you have any queries about this letter please contact me quoting the reference number above.

Yours sincerely,

DWP Central FoI Team