

CHAPTER 5

Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Housing Department

**Management of leave in the Food and Environmental
Hygiene Department and the Housing Department**

**Audit Commission
Hong Kong
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This audit review was carried out under a set of guidelines tabled in the Provisional Legislative Council by the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee on 11 February 1998. The guidelines were agreed between the Public Accounts Committee and the Director of Audit and accepted by the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

Report No. 55 of the Director of Audit contains 11 Chapters which are available on our website at <http://www.aud.gov.hk>.

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MANAGEMENT OF LEAVE IN THE FOOD AND ENVIRONMENTAL HYGIENE DEPARTMENT AND THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT

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PART 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 This PART describes the background to the audit and outlines the audit objectives and scope.

Leave entitlements of civil servants

1.2 *Civil Service Regulations.* The Civil Service Bureau (CSB) assumes overall policy responsibility for the management of leave in the civil service. The Civil Service Regulations (CSRs), as supplemented by CSB Circulars, set out the leave entitlements of civil servants and the authority of the Secretary for the Civil Service and Heads of Department on day-to-day leave management.

1.3 *Classification of leave.* CSR 1100 states that leave may be broadly classified into two groups:

- (a) those that are earned according to the terms of appointment of officers, including vacation leave; and
- (b) those that are granted under special circumstances, including sick leave, maternity leave and study leave.

1.4 *Vacation leave.* CSR 1101(1) provides that, subject to the exigencies of the service, an officer may be granted his earned vacation leave. The vacation leave earning rate and accumulation limit for an officer depend on his terms of appointment, years of service and salary. Details are at Appendix A.

1.5 *Sick leave.* CSR 1270(b) defines sick leave as any period during which an officer is permitted to be absent from duty on account of illness, or other medical treatment or investigation, without forfeiting leave of any other description. According to CSRs 1275 and 1276, an officer's normal sick leave entitlement (Note 1) is as follows:

- (a) *Officers with less than four years of service.* Sick leave may be granted up to a total of 91 days on full pay and 91 days on half pay; and

Note 1: *CSR 1277 provides that sick leave granted for recovery from an occupational disease or for an injury on duty, or in connection with organ or bone marrow donation operations will not be counted against an officer's normal sick leave entitlement.*

- (b) **Officers with four years of service or more.** Sick leave may be granted up to 182 days on full pay and 182 days on half pay, less any sick leave taken in the four years preceding the current sick leave.

In addition, CSR 904 provides that officers will be allowed time-off from duty for attendance at clinics for approved treatment, examination or consultation (Note 2).

1.6 **Maternity leave.** CSR 1297 provides that maternity leave covering a total absence from duty of up to 10 weeks may be granted to a female officer because of her pregnancy or confinement.

1.7 **Study leave.** CSR 1001 provides that study leave may be granted to officers nominated to undertake full-time training relevant to their duties. In addition, CSR 1002 provides that study leave of up to 14 days in any period of 12 months may be granted for officers to prepare and sit for examinations if the qualifications are required for work.

Leave entitlements of contract staff

1.8 The leave entitlements of contract staff are determined by the employing departments and specified in their contracts. For non-civil service contract (NCSC) staff employed in accordance with the NCSC scheme promulgated in CSB Circular No. 2/2001 “Employment of NCSC Staff” (Note 3), the Circular provides that their leave arrangements may be better than the provisions of the Employment Ordinance (Cap. 57) where appropriate, but should be no more favourable than the provisions for civil servants.

Audit review

1.9 The Audit Commission (Audit) has recently conducted a review of the management of leave in government departments. The review covered three major departments, namely the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD), the Housing Department (HD) and the Hong Kong Police Force. The audit findings are contained in two separate reports, as follows:

Note 2: *Time-off granted under CSR 904 is different from time-off earned from overtime work and is not counted against any uncompensated overtime balance. The scope of this audit did not include time-off earned from overtime work.*

Note 3: *CSB Circular No. 2/2001 provides that Heads of Department may employ NCSC staff remunerated at non-directorate equivalent level to meet their service needs. NCSC staff are not appointed on civil service terms of appointment and conditions of service. Subject to the provisions in the Circular, Heads of Department have the full authority and discretion to decide on the employment of NCSC staff and related matters.*

- (a) management of leave in the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department and the Housing Department (the subject matter of this report); and
- (b) management of leave in the Hong Kong Police Force (Chapter 6 of the Director of Audit's Report No. 55).

1.10 Audit's review of the management of leave in the FEHD and the HD has revealed room for improvement in various areas, which are reported as follows:

- (a) management of leave in the FEHD (PART 2); and
- (b) management of leave in the HD (PART 3).

Audit has made a number of recommendations to address the issues.

General response from the Administration

1.11 The **Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene** agrees with all the audit recommendations in PART 2.

1.12 The **Director of Housing** agrees with all the audit recommendations in PART 3.

1.13 The **Secretary for the Civil Service** welcomes the audit review of the management of leave in government departments. She has said that:

- (a) the CSB attaches great importance to the consistent and proper administration of the different types of leave across government bureaux and departments. To this end, the CSB has stipulated relevant rules in the CSRs, which are supplemented by guidelines as appropriate on matters of wide concern. The CSB has also developed the e-Leave System (see para. 2.3) for general use in the civil service;
- (b) in the light of the leave administration issues revealed in the audit review, the CSB will consider alerting other bureaux and departments to the issues of common concern. The CSB will also consider whether there is a need to supplement, further elaborate or clarify, the existing guidelines;
- (c) the CSB stands ready to assist if the FEHD and the HD have doubts on the interpretation of the CSRs pertaining to the administration of different types of leave for civil servants or their application on individual cases;

- (d) for NCSC staff, the Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Department have the authority and discretion to devise their own leave administration measures, giving due regard to relevant factors. The CSB stands ready to offer advice to them as and when required; and

- (e) with reference to sick leave, the CSB attaches great importance to the need to strike an appropriate balance between making sick leave available and safeguarding against abuse. The Government places great emphasis on the safety and health of its employees. The CSB has been actively promoting and facilitating the implementation of occupational safety and health measures, and safety management systems in bureaux and departments, with the objective of fostering a caring and safety culture, and ensuring that risks to staff's health and safety at work are properly managed. Other than providing guidance, the CSB also organises service-wide educational and publicity programmes. The CSB believes that the concerted efforts of the parties concerned would help reduce the accident rate and maintain the extent of sick leave of staff at a reasonable level.

Acknowledgement

1.14 Audit would like to acknowledge with gratitude the full cooperation of the staff of the FEHD and the HD during the course of the audit review.

PART 2: MANAGEMENT OF LEAVE IN THE FOOD AND ENVIRONMENTAL HYGIENE DEPARTMENT

2.1 This PART examines issues relating to the management of leave in the FEHD. The following issues are discussed:

- (a) leave management systems (paras. 2.3 to 2.10);
- (b) leave application and approval (paras. 2.11 to 2.16);
- (c) leave recording (paras. 2.17 to 2.25);
- (d) monitoring of the level of sick leave (paras. 2.26 to 2.34);
- (e) management of frequent sick leave (paras. 2.35 to 2.41);
- (f) management of frequent time-off (paras. 2.42 to 2.48); and
- (g) management of prolonged sick leave (paras. 2.49 to 2.54).

Staff strength of Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

2.2 The FEHD delivers its services through the Centre for Food Safety, the Environmental Hygiene Branch and the Administration and Development Branch. As at 31 March 2010, the FEHD had a strength of 10,380 staff, comprising 9,850 civil servants and 530 NCSC staff (see para. 1.8). In total, there were 23 leave registries responsible for the day-to-day administration of matters relating to leave. In particular, each of the 19 district offices under the Environmental Hygiene Branch had its own leave registry.

Leave management systems

e-Leave System for civil servants

2.3 The FEHD uses the e-Leave System for recording various types of leave taken by its civil service staff. The e-Leave System is a web-based computer system developed by the CSB for general use in the civil service. It comprises the following two systems:

- (a) the Electronic Leave Application and Processing System (eLAPS); and
- (b) the Leave Recording and Calculation System (LRCS).

2.4 **eLAPS.** eLAPS is a front-end workflow system for leave application and processing. FEHD civil service staff may submit vacation and sick leave applications through eLAPS for processing by approving officers electronically. eLAPS does not cater for maternity and study leave applications.

2.5 **LRCS.** The LRCS is a back-end rule-based system for leave recording and calculation. Leave is recorded as follows:

- (a) **Leave applications submitted through eLAPS.** The LRCS directly captures the leave data after a vacation or sick leave application is submitted and approved electronically; and
- (b) **Leave applications submitted in paper form.** Where a FEHD civil service staff applies for vacation or sick leave by submitting an application form (instead of through eLAPS), or submits a maternity or study leave application form, the approving officer passes the approved form to the leave registry. The leave registry records the leave in the LRCS by on-line inputting the leave details contained in the form.

Manual records for NCSC staff

2.6 The FEHD keeps manual records of leave taken by its NCSC staff. All NCSC staff apply for leave in paper form.

Audit observations and recommendations

2.7 **Civil servants.** According to the FEHD, since implementing the e-Leave System in July 2004, it has installed additional workstations to facilitate access to eLAPS. It has also conducted many training courses on using eLAPS to submit leave applications electronically. However, most FEHD civil service staff continued to submit leave applications in paper form. Audit's examination of the use of eLAPS in February 2010 revealed that:

- (a) only 25% of FEHD civil service staff used eLAPS to apply for leave electronically; and
- (b) of the FEHD civil service staff who submitted leave applications in paper form, 44% were staff remunerated on Model Scale 1 (e.g. Ganger, Workman I and Workman II). The remaining included staff of higher ranks (e.g. Senior Hawker Control Officer, Overseer and Senior Foreman).

Apart from the lower efficiency and higher staff cost, the processing of leave applications in paper form is also more susceptible to input errors, leading to unrecorded or incorrectly recorded leave.

2.8 *NCSC staff.* Regarding extending the use of eLAPS for NCSC staff, Audit understands that:

- (a) while the use of eLAPS can be extended to NCSC staff for the submission and approval of leave applications electronically, the LRCS does not provide functions to automate the leave calculation and recording processes for such staff; and
- (b) it is up to the FEHD to decide whether to extend the use of eLAPS for NCSC staff, having regard to costs and benefits.

2.9 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene should:**

- (a) **ascertain the reasons why most FEHD civil service staff of various grades continue to submit leave applications in paper form, after implementing eLAPS for electronic leave application and processing;**
- (b) **based on the review results, take effective measures to increase the use of eLAPS for submitting and processing leave applications electronically; and**
- (c) **consider extending the use of eLAPS for the FEHD's NCSC staff, having regard to costs and benefits.**

Response from the Administration

2.10 The **Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene** agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:

Reasons for not using eLAPS

- (a) over 80% of FEHD civil service staff perform outdoor and/or shift duties. Use of personal computers is not common/required in the conduct of their duties. Officers would need to make special efforts, either before or after their shift hours, to access a personal computer to apply for leave. Approximately half of them are junior rank officers. Staff union representatives have expressed concern over using eLAPS as they do not have knowledge or experience in using personal computers;

- (b) many staff only have a shared use of personal computers in their office. They are concerned that they have to queue up for use of personal computers;
- (c) staff experienced long responding time in accessing eLAPS when operating personal computers set up at remote outstations, which discouraged some staff from using the system;

Increasing the use of eLAPS

- (d) to address staff concerns and to enable more staff to use eLAPS, the FEHD has taken measures to upgrade the hardware. In 2007-08, 291 secured broadband lines were deployed to replace low speed dialup lines, which has significantly improved the responding time from remote access to eLAPS. In 2008, the number of offices/outstations with networked personal computers was increased from 130 to 250, and the number of networked personal computers from 3,500 to 4,200. In 2009, the FEHD upgraded another 1,200 personal computers;
- (e) as at September 2010, almost all outstations, including refuse collection points where foremen and workmen operate, are equipped with networked broadband personal computers. In addition, the number of departmental portal accounts (for access to eLAPS) has been increased from some 4,500 to 10,000 in June 2010;
- (f) in terms of staff training, from June to August 2010, over 40 on-site/reaching out sessions were conducted for frontline staff. Use of eLAPS will be included in all induction training for new recruits of the Hawker Control Officer and Foreman grades;
- (g) the FEHD is encouraging the senior/supervisory rank officers in the Hawker Control Officer and Foreman grades to use eLAPS so that they will lead by example. The FEHD aims to achieve a wider use of eLAPS gradually from the more senior to the lower ranks over time; and

Extending the use of eLAPS for NCSC staff

- (h) the FEHD aims to extend the use of eLAPS for all NCSC staff to facilitate the submission and approval of leave applications electronically where feasible by September 2010.

Leave application and approval

2.11 ***FEHD guidelines.*** FEHD staff are required to comply with the following guidelines on vacation leave application and approval:

- (a) staff are responsible for ensuring that their vacation leave applications are submitted as early as practicable and approval is obtained before the leave is taken; and
- (b) approving officers are responsible for prompt processing of vacation leave applications submitted to them, and ensuring that their staff are on duty unless leave has been approved.

Audit observations and recommendations

Need to submit vacation leave applications as early as practicable

2.12 Audit's examination of 51,623 vacation leave applications (Note 4) in 2009-10 revealed that 2,403 applications were submitted after the leave commencement date. In particular, 187 applications were submitted 10 days or more after the leave commencement date.

2.13 The early submission and approval of leave applications facilitates the making of necessary arrangements for maintaining operational effectiveness, particularly for vacation leave of a long duration. It also reduces the risk of staff omitting to submit leave applications after the leave has been taken, and the resultant unrecorded leave. In Audit's view, the FEHD needs to regularly remind leave applicants to comply with the requirement of submitting vacation leave applications as early as practicable and obtaining approval before the leave is taken. The FEHD also needs to regularly remind approving officers to ensure their subordinates' compliance with this requirement.

Need to ensure prompt processing of leave applications

2.14 Where a leave application submitted electronically through eLAPS has not been processed by the approving officer, it will be treated as an outstanding application and will not be recorded as leave in the LRCS. Audit's examination of a list of outstanding applications, as at 31 March 2010, revealed that 14 leave applications had been outstanding for more than 20 days since their submission. In particular, four applications had been outstanding for over five years. In Audit's view, the FEHD needs to find out why these 14 leave applications had been outstanding for so long without being detected, and take rectification actions where appropriate. The FEHD also needs to monitor the outstanding leave applications not recorded in the LRCS to ensure that leave applications are processed promptly.

Note 4: *The 51,623 vacation leave applications comprised all the 51,023 applications submitted electronically through eLAPS and a sample of 600 applications in paper form as submitted to four leave registries.*

Audit recommendations

2.15 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene should:**

- (a) **regularly remind leave applicants to comply with the requirement of submitting vacation leave applications as early as practicable and obtaining approval before the leave is taken, and similarly remind approving officers to ensure their subordinates' compliance with this requirement;**
- (b) **find out why the 14 long outstanding leave applications identified by Audit had been outstanding for so long, without being detected, and take rectification actions where appropriate; and**
- (c) **monitor the outstanding leave applications not recorded in the LRCS to ensure that leave applications are processed promptly.**

Response from the Administration

2.16 **The Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene** agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:

- (a) the leave registries will be instructed to draw the attention of leave applicants/supervisors to comply with the requirement of submitting vacation leave applications as early as practicable and obtaining approval before the leave is taken. The relevant FEHD circular is being re-circulated every six months to remind staff of such requirement;
- (b) the 187 applications which were submitted 10 days or more after the leave commencement date represented 0.36% of all vacation leave applications in 2009-10. The leave registries are being instructed to bring to the attention of the supervisors to ensure that appropriate and prompt actions will be taken to avoid recurrence;
- (c) investigation on the 14 long outstanding leave applications identified by Audit is in progress and rectification will be carried out as soon as practicable. Initial results indicate that half of them involved sick leave and the rest involved vacation leave. Of the seven sick leave applications, four applicants had been given "provisional approval" in eLAPS, as the approving officers were awaiting advice from the Medical Board concerned (see para. 2.49). As for the remaining vacation leave applications, five of them were found to have been replaced by paper-form applications and were recorded in the LRCS. The leave registries have since revised/updated the relevant leave records; and

- (d) a mechanism will be put in place at the Headquarters level to monitor the outstanding leave applications handled by all the leave registries, and to ensure that leave applications are processed promptly.

Leave recording

2.17 *Random checks of leave records.* The CSB guidelines state that, in order to ensure input and calculation accuracy of leave records, and prevent omission and unauthorised amendments, departments should arrange to conduct random checks of leave records in the e-Leave System, as follows:

- (a) random checks should be conducted at least once every three months;
- (b) for leave applications submitted electronically through eLAPS, at least 3% of the applications or 500 applications, whichever is the less, should be selected for checking; and
- (c) for leave applications submitted in paper form, at least 5% of the application forms should be selected for checking.

Audit observations and recommendations

Need to conduct random checks of leave records

2.18 *Non-compliance with CSB guidelines.* Audit reviewed how the 23 leave registries conducted their random checks of leave records for 2007-08 to 2009-10. Audit found instances of non-compliance with the CSB guidelines, as follows:

- (a) 3 registries did not conduct any checks;
- (b) 6 registries did not conduct checks for one or two of the three years; and
- (c) 3 registries only checked the leave applications submitted in paper form but not those submitted electronically through eLAPS.

2.19 *Need to ensure compliance.* Upon enquiry, in June 2010, some leave registries explained to Audit that the CSB guidelines were not strictly followed because the responsible officers at the time were unaware of the requirement. In Audit's view, the FEHD needs to take measures to ensure compliance with the CSB guidelines.

Need to review controls over leave and time-off recording

2.20 **Unrecorded leave.** FEHD staff of certain ranks are required to sign manually an attendance register to record the time of their arrival and departure. Audit randomly selected 80 officers from four FEHD offices and checked their attendance records against their leave and time-off records for January 2009 to March 2010. Audit found that, in respect of 34 occasions (involving 46.5 days of leave taken by 23 officers) shown in the attendance registers, the leave had not been recorded in the e-Leave System. Table 1 shows the details.

Table 1
Unrecorded leave for 23 officers examined by Audit
(January 2009 to March 2010)

Type of leave	Number of officers with unrecorded leave	Number of occasions of unrecorded leave	Number of days of unrecorded leave
Vacation leave	9 (Note)	10	10
Sick leave	12 (Note)	20	32
Study leave	3	4	4.5
Total	23	34	46.5

Source: FEHD records

Note: One officer had both unrecorded vacation and sick leave.

2.21 **Unrecorded time-off.** Audit's examination of the 80 officers also revealed that, in respect of 37 occasions (involving 22 officers) shown in the attendance registers, the time-off for medical treatment, examination or consultation had not been recorded by the leave registries (Note 5).

Note 5: *Approving officers are required to pass approved time-off application forms to the leave registries. The leave registries record the time-off either using computer spreadsheets or in paper form.*

2.22 *Need to review controls.* Given the cases of unrecorded leave and time-off found in Audit's sample check, the FEHD needs to consider conducting similar checks of the past leave and time-off records to ascertain whether there are other cases requiring rectification. The FEHD needs to investigate the cases to identify the deficiencies in the controls over leave and time-off recording. Based on the investigation results, the FEHD needs to take improvement measures to ensure the proper recording of leave and time-off taken by all officers.

Need to refer unapproved leave application forms to approving officers

2.23 Audit's sample check of 400 leave application forms processed by four leave registries in 2009-10 revealed that five forms had not been signed by the approving officers. There was no evidence that the leave registries concerned had referred these five forms to the approving officers before recording the leave in the LRCS. In Audit's view, the FEHD needs to require the leave registries to refer unapproved leave application forms to the approving officers for taking appropriate actions. This will help detect cases of leave taken without approval.

Audit recommendations

2.24 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene should:**

- (a) **take measures to ensure that all the leave registries conduct random checks of leave records in compliance with the CSB guidelines;**
- (b) **given the cases of unrecorded leave and time-off for medical treatment, examination or consultation found in Audit's sample check, consider conducting similar checks of the past leave and time-off records to ascertain whether there are other cases requiring rectification;**
- (c) **investigate the cases of unrecorded leave and time-off identified by Audit (and any other similar cases) to identify the deficiencies in the controls over leave and time-off recording;**
- (d) **based on the investigation results, take improvement measures to ensure the proper recording of leave and time-off taken by all officers;**
- (e) **take rectification actions on the cases of unrecorded leave and time-off identified by Audit; and**

- (f) **require the leave registries to refer unapproved leave application forms (including the five unapproved forms identified by Audit) to the approving officers for taking appropriate actions.**

Response from the Administration

2.25 The **Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene** agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:

- (a) the leave registries will be instructed to conduct random checks of leave records quarterly in compliance with the CSB guidelines. They will be required to report to the Headquarters that random checks are conducted. The relevant FEHD circulars will be updated to reflect the requirement;
- (b) given the cases of unrecorded leave and time-off found in Audit's sample check, the leave registries will be instructed to conduct similar checks thoroughly of leave and time-off records from January 2009 to March 2010, and carry out necessary rectification actions;
- (c) the cases of unrecorded leave and time-off are being investigated, and measures will be formulated to address the problems identified on completing the investigations. Rectification actions on the cases are being taken; and
- (d) the leave registries will be instructed to vet and refer unapproved leave application forms to the approving officers for appropriate actions.

Monitoring of the level of sick leave

2.26 *CSB guidelines.* According to the CSB guidelines on the management of sick leave of civil servants:

- (a) each department may consider setting up a central system to monitor the sick leave of its staff at different levels (i.e. individual officers, individual units/sections, individual ranks and the department as a whole);
- (b) a regular analysis of the sick leave of the staff, taking into account the particular departmental circumstances and operational reasons impacting on the sick leave level, may help in identifying the problem areas (e.g. possible abuse and factors undermining occupational safety and health); and

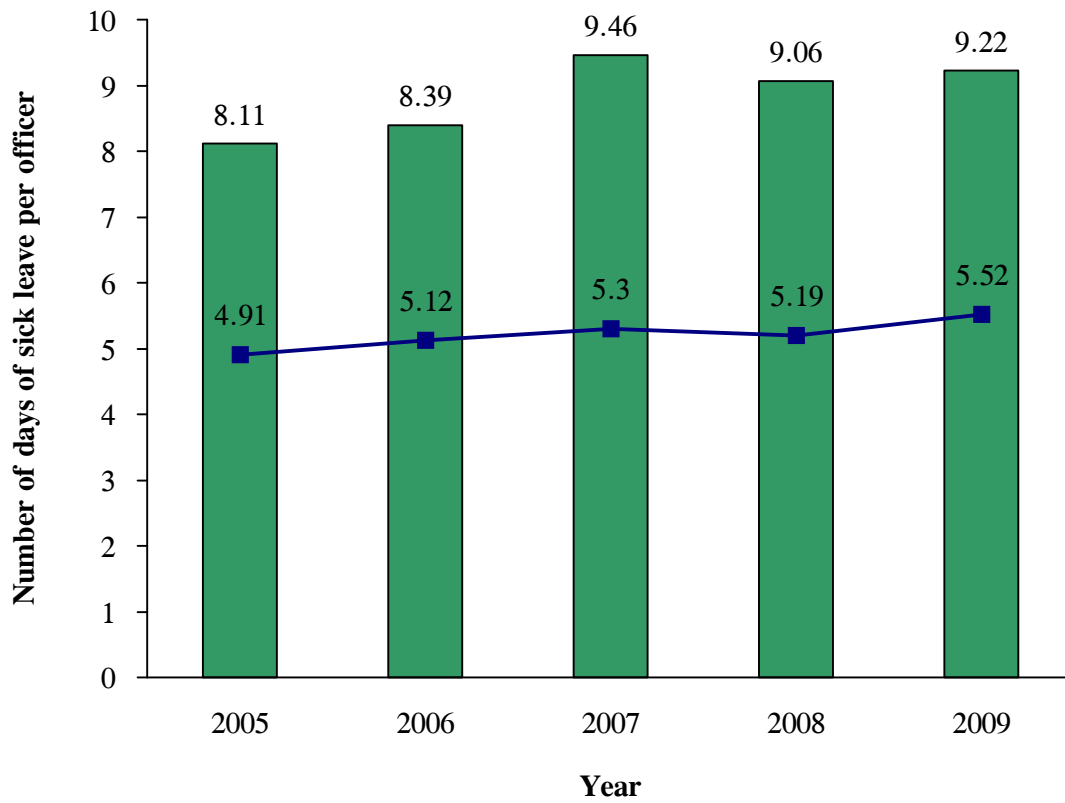
- (c) if some staff are found to be more prone to sick leave due to their work nature, the department should liaise with the CSB to see how the CSB can assist in distributing information on health care and occupational safety, with a view to minimising the adverse impact of sick leave on the productivity of the department.

The CSB requires departments to submit annual returns of sick leave data. Based on the departmental returns, the CSB compiles a summary of sick leave level in the civil service. In distributing the summary to departments, the CSB will invite them, in particular those recording a relatively high sick leave level (with reference to the service-wide situation) to conduct internal analyses and consider whether any follow-up action is required, in the light of their specific circumstances.

2.27 *Sick leave levels.* Figure 1 shows a comparison of the annual sick leave levels, for 2005 to 2009, of FEHD civil service staff and those of civil servants as a whole.

Figure 1

Sick leave levels of FEHD civil service staff
and those of civil servants as a whole
(2005 to 2009)



Legend: —■— Sick leave level of civil servants as a whole

■ Sick leave level of FEHD civil service staff

Source: CSB and FEHD records

Remarks: NCSC staff are not included in this Figure because there is no readily available information about their sick leave levels.

2.28 Figure 1 shows that:

- (a) during 2005 to 2009, the sick leave levels of FEHD civil service staff ranged from 8.11 to 9.46 days per officer and averaged 8.85 days. These were significantly higher than those of civil servants as a whole, which ranged from 4.91 to 5.52 days per officer and averaged 5.21 days. For example, in 2009, the sick leave level of 9.22 days per officer for FEHD civil service staff was 67% higher than that of 5.52 days for civil servants as a whole; and
- (b) the sick leave level of FEHD civil service staff increased from 8.11 days per officer in 2005, by 14%, to 9.22 days in 2009. During the same period, the sick leave level of civil servants as a whole increased by 12% only (from 4.91 days per officer to 5.52 days).

2.29 ***FEHD analysis of sick leave situation.*** In May 2010, noting that the FEHD had consistently reported a relatively high sick leave level, the CSB invited the FEHD to examine the leave-taking situation and consider any follow-up action that might be warranted. In July 2010, the FEHD gave a response as summarised below:

- (a) ***Job nature.*** A majority of the junior departmental grade officers had to perform outdoor and/or manual work. They were exposed to obnoxious elements in their working environment. These possibly made them more vulnerable to different kinds of sickness and injury;
- (b) ***Injury on duty.*** The higher overall sick leave level (including sick leave relating to injury on duty) might be attributable to the outdoor and manual nature of duties of frontline staff who were relatively more prone to sustaining injuries while on duty (Note 6);
- (c) ***Age profile.*** The FEHD had a relatively higher percentage of older staff who might need more medical consultations and treatments. Approximately 58% of FEHD staff were at the age of 50 or above as at 31 March 2010, as compared to 29% in the civil service (Note 7); and

Note 6: *According to the FEHD, in 2009, injury-on-duty sick leave represented about 15% of FEHD staff sick leave. As for other sick leave, about 3% were granted to some 80 officers who were on prolonged sick leave (i.e. over 91 consecutive days — see para. 2.49(a)). Their sick leave was granted on the advice of the medical practitioner or Medical Board concerned.*

Note 7: *According to the FEHD, in 2009, 68% of FEHD staff sick leave were granted to officers aged 50 or above.*

- (d) **Action to take.** The FEHD would remind the leave administrators to be vigilant of possible abuse of sick leave and the actions to be taken in suspected abuse cases. The FEHD would continue with the efforts on enhancing occupational safety and health, with a view to further reducing cases relating to injury on duty and hence the overall sick leave level.

2.30 **Audit analysis of sick leave of staff of district offices.** The civil service staff of the 19 FEHD district offices are mostly junior frontline staff who are responsible for performing outdoor and/or manual work. According to the records of the e-Leave System, in 2009, 65,000 days of sick leave were taken by 6,400 staff of the 19 district offices. This translated into a sick leave level of 10.16 days per officer, which was higher than the level of 5.52 days for civil servants as a whole. Audit's analysis revealed that the staff of different district offices had very different sick leave levels, ranging from 5.88 to 16.39 days per officer. Table 2 shows the details.

Table 2

**Sick leave levels of civil service staff of district offices
(2009)**

Sick leave level (Days per officer)	Number of district offices
Over 5 to 6	1
Over 6 to 7	1
Over 8 to 9	7
Over 9 to 10	1
Over 10 to 11	1
Over 11 to 12	4
Over 12 to 13	1
Over 13 to 14	2
Over 16 to 17	1
Total	19

Source: Audit's analysis of FEHD records

Audit observations and recommendations

2.31 *Management commitment.* Audit shares the CSB's view that the relatively high sick leave level of FEHD civil service staff, compared to civil servants as a whole, requires the FEHD's attention. Audit also notes the FEHD's assurance that actions will continue regarding the possible abuse of sick leave and the promotion of occupational safety and health. To demonstrate a firm management commitment to address the persistently high sick leave level, Audit considers that the FEHD needs to:

- (a) set a clear two-pronged strategy (supported by appropriate action plans) to:
 - (i) enhance occupational safety and health, building on the existing programmes; and
 - (ii) strengthen the management of sick leave, taking into account the audit findings on unrecorded sick leave (para. 2.20), analyses of sick leave (para. 2.32), frequent sick leave (para. 2.38) and prolonged sick leave (para. 2.51); and
- (b) ensure that the issue receives the close attention of the FEHD's senior management through, for example, its Senior Directorate Meeting (Note 8), a forum at which important departmental issues are discussed.

2.32 *Analyses of sick leave.* Regarding the reasons for the higher sick leave level, the FEHD explained that it might be attributable to the outdoor and manual nature of duties of junior frontline staff and the age profile of staff. However, Audit's analysis revealed that the staff of different district offices, though performing similar outdoor and manual work and having a similar age profile, had very different sick leave levels. This suggests that there might be other factors (e.g. inadequate leave management and local factors undermining occupational safety and health) leading to the higher sick leave levels for some district offices. Further analyses are needed to identify them for taking appropriate actions.

2.33 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene should:**

Note 8: *The Senior Directorate Meeting is chaired by the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene. The Deputy Directors, Controller of the Centre for Food Safety, and Assistant Directors are members. Meetings are held monthly.*

- (a) **set a clear two-pronged strategy (supported by appropriate action plans) to strengthen the management of sick leave and enhance occupational safety and health, in order to demonstrate a firm management commitment to address the persistently high sick leave level;**
- (b) **ensure that the issue of sick leave receives the close attention of the FEHD's senior management (through, for example, the Senior Directorate Meeting) and require regular reporting to the senior management of the implementation progress of the sick leave strategy and any problems encountered; and**
- (c) **regularly conduct detailed analyses of sick leave, particularly for district offices with higher sick leave levels, with a view to identifying the factors leading to the higher levels and devising specific measures to address them.**

Response from the Administration

2.34 The **Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene** agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:

- (a) the FEHD attaches great importance to raising awareness of occupational safety and health among staff. Since 2005, a committee chaired by a Deputy Director has been holding meetings regularly to formulate policies and strategies on promoting occupational safety and health among staff. The number of injury-on-duty cases decreased substantially from 637 cases in 2005, by 37%, to 399 cases in 2009;
- (b) as for management of sick leave, the FEHD will establish a system to remind the leave registries to monitor and check leave applications, and report the situation to the Headquarters regularly. Further, the FEHD will promote the wider use of eLAPS so that sick leave will be recorded electronically for better monitoring;
- (c) the FEHD attaches great importance to the effective management of sick leave. It will assign a senior directorate officer to monitor the implementation progress and problems encountered; and
- (d) investigation revealed that the three FEHD district offices with the highest sick leave levels, in total, accounted for over one-third of the injury-on-duty sick leave days granted to FEHD officers in 2009. Regular analyses will be conducted by the Headquarters and reported to the senior directorate for monitoring and, if necessary, formulating specific measures to address the issues identified.

Management of frequent sick leave

2.35 **CSB guidelines.** The CSB guidelines on the management of sick leave of civil servants state that:

- (a) with an established system to monitor the sick leave level of staff, departments should be able to identify staff taking sick leave on a frequent basis. In this connection, they should set trigger points for reviewing officer's sick leave having regard to their operational circumstances;
- (b) for an officer taking frequent sick leave (e.g. an officer whose sick leave level has exceeded the relevant trigger point), the departmental management should take early monitoring action, including, for instance, interviewing the officer with a view to understanding the reasons for the frequent sick leave and considering the appropriate action;
- (c) where necessary, the officer should be required to produce a medical certificate for sick leave irrespective of the duration (i.e. withdrawing the concession under CSR 1273(2)(a) for granting sick leave not exceeding two working days without a medical certificate);
- (d) where there are indications of abuse of sick leave, the officer should be required to produce a medical certificate issued by a designated government or Hospital Authority clinic or medical officer every time he applies for sick leave, or be examined by a Medical Board (i.e. imposing the requirement under CSR 1291); and
- (e) the follow-up action should be reviewed frequently and consideration should be given to stepping up the action or taking other actions if necessary (e.g. disciplinary action on an officer failing to produce the specified medical certificates despite repeated advice).

2.36 **FEHD guidelines.** The FEHD guidelines state that, in cases where a civil service staff has taken more than 10 days of sick leave within six months, the leave registry should report to the responsible Senior Executive Officer for considering follow-up actions and the need for tightening up the granting of sick leave.

2.37 **Leave registries' practices.** In response to Audit's enquiry, 13 of the 23 leave registries stated that their practice was to conduct monthly reviews to identify officers with sick leave exceeding the trigger point. The other 10 leave registries stated that whenever an officer submitted a sick leave application, they would review his sick leave against the trigger point.

Audit observations and recommendations

2.38 *Frequent sick leave of civil servants.* The setting of a trigger point is an effective management tool to facilitate consideration in good time of appropriate follow-up action on abuse cases or assistance to the staff concerned, such as redeployment or posting arrangement having regard to the officer's health condition. However, Audit found that there was room for improvement in the management of frequent sick leave using the trigger point. The audit findings are summarised as follows:

- (a) *No reviews conducted in some months.* During 2007-08 to 2009-10, 10 leave registries, which adopted the practice of conducting monthly reviews of sick leave of staff, did not conduct a review in some months;
- (b) *Some reviews not conducted thoroughly.* In 2009-10, in conducting reviews of sick leave, four leave registries failed to identify a total of nine cases with sick leave exceeding the trigger point;
- (c) *No action on some frequent sick leave cases.* In 2009-10, one leave registry did not take any follow-up action on 10 cases identified with sick leave exceeding the trigger point; and
- (d) *Delay in taking action.* For one leave registry, the cases with sick leave exceeding the trigger point as identified in January 2010 were not reviewed by the responsible Senior Executive Officer until May 2010.

2.39 *Frequent sick leave of NCSC staff.* The FEHD does not have an established system to monitor the sick leave level of its NCSC staff and manage frequent sick leave taken by them. In Audit's view, the FEHD may benefit from such a system, as it will facilitate monitoring by the senior management and will ensure consistency among the leave registries in handling cases of frequent sick leave. The FEHD may need to seek the CSB's advice if it encounters difficulties in establishing the system.

2.40 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene should:**

- (a) **regularly remind the leave registries to conduct reviews of sick leave of civil service staff thoroughly, and to take timely follow-up action as appropriate on cases identified with sick leave exceeding the trigger point; and**
- (b) **consider establishing a system to monitor the sick leave level of the NCSC staff and manage frequent sick leave taken by them, and seek the CSB's advice where appropriate.**

Response from the Administration

2.41 The **Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene** agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:

- (a) the leave registries will be instructed to conduct reviews of sick leave against the trigger point thoroughly and take timely follow-up action in accordance with departmental guidelines; and
- (b) the FEHD will consider strengthening the monitoring of frequent sick leave taken by its NCSC staff in consultation with the CSB. Under prevailing requirements, all NCSC staff are required to produce valid medical certificates to secure the grant of sick leave, irrespective of the length of the leave.

Management of frequent time-off

2.42 **CSR.** CSR 904 provides that officers will be allowed time-off from duty for attendance at clinics for approved treatment, examination or consultation.

2.43 **CSB guidelines.** According to CSB Circular No. 2/2007 “Guidelines on the management of time-off granted under CSR 904”:

- (a) for effective management and monitoring, departmental management should keep proper record of time-off granted for medical treatment, examination or consultation as appropriate;
- (b) departmental management should pay particular attention to cases involving frequent applications for time-off. They should put in place appropriate arrangements to monitor such cases. Where necessary, they may consider setting trigger points having regard to their operational circumstances to facilitate monitoring; and
- (c) for officers taking frequent time-off, the management should take appropriate management action in a timely manner, for instance, ascertaining from the officer concerned the reasons for frequent applications for time-off and taking follow-up action as necessary.

2.44 **FEHD guidelines.** The FEHD guidelines state that in cases where a civil service staff has taken more than 13 occasions of time-off for medical treatment, examination or consultation within six months, the leave registry should report to the responsible Senior Executive Officer for considering follow-up actions and the need for tightening up the granting of time-off (Note 9).

2.45 **Leave registries' practices.** In response to Audit's enquiry, 6 of the 23 leave registries stated that their practice was to conduct monthly reviews to identify officers with time-off exceeding the trigger point. The other 17 leave registries stated that whenever an officer submitted a time-off application, they would review his time-off against the trigger point.

Audit observations and recommendation

2.46 Similar to sick leave, the trigger point for time-off is an effective management tool to facilitate consideration in good time of appropriate follow-up action on abuse cases or assistance to the staff concerned. However, Audit found that, of the six leave registries adopting the practice of conducting monthly reviews of time-off of staff, two did not conduct a review in some months during 2007-08 to 2009-10. For instance, in 2008-09, one of the two leave registries omitted to conduct reviews in eight months.

2.47 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene should regularly remind the leave registries to conduct reviews of time-off granted to staff for medical treatment, examination or consultation against the trigger point in compliance with the FEHD guidelines.**

Response from the Administration

2.48 The **Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene** agrees with the audit recommendation. He has said that the leave registries will be instructed to conduct reviews of time-off granted against the trigger point in accordance with departmental guidelines.

Management of prolonged sick leave

2.49 **CSRs.** The CSRs set out the following procedures for granting prolonged sick leave:

Note 9: *For NCSC staff, the FEHD guidelines state that supervisors may exercise discretion to grant time-off for medical treatment not more than twice per month.*

- (a) **CSR 1282.** If an officer is still unfit to perform his duties after being granted 91 consecutive days of sick leave, the Head of Department will request the Hospital Authority to appoint a Medical Board to examine the officer for advice whether he should be granted further sick leave, or be invalided from the service, or whether other action should be taken. The Head of Department may, after considering the Board's recommendation, grant further sick leave up to a maximum of 91 days; and
- (b) **CSR 1283.** If the officer is still unfit for duty after being granted 182 consecutive days of sick leave, a further Medical Board should be arranged, and thereafter at intervals of three months.

2.50 **CSB guidelines.** According to the CSB guidelines on the management of sick leave of civil servants:

- (a) in circumstances where the Head of Department considers it inappropriate, impracticable or unnecessary to convene a Medical Board and that the granting of further sick leave is fully justified, exceptional approval may be sought from the CSB to grant sick leave without consulting a Medical Board; and
- (b) each department should put in place a mechanism to ensure the timely identification of prolonged sick leave cases and arrangements for the convening of Medical Boards (e.g. conducting a monthly review of cases in which more than 60 days of sick leave have been taken and starting to make preparations for the convening of a Medical Board in case the officer concerned is likely or has applied to take sick leave exceeding 91 or 182 days).

Audit observations and recommendations

2.51 **Prolonged sick leave of civil servants.** Audit's sample check of 25 cases of prolonged sick leave (over 91 consecutive days) of four FEHD offices in 2007-08 to 2009-10 revealed areas for improvement in the management of prolonged sick leave, as follows:

- (a) **Medical Boards not convened.** In 12 cases, the FEHD did not request the Hospital Authority to appoint a Medical Board, contrary to CSRs 1282 or 1283. There was no evidence that the FEHD had sought approval from the CSB to grant sick leave without consulting a Medical Board;
- (b) **Delays in arranging for convening of Medical Boards.** In four cases, there were delays of one to six months in requesting the Hospital Authority to appoint a Medical Board (i.e. counting from the date the officer had been granted 91 or 182 consecutive days of sick leave); and

- (c) ***Clarification on Medical Board's advice not sought.*** In six cases, the Medical Boards did not state in their reports whether any further sick leave beyond 91 or 182 days should be granted. However, the FEHD granted further sick leave to the officers concerned without seeking clarification from the Medical Boards.

2.52 ***Prolonged sick leave of NCSC staff.*** Audit notes that the FEHD does not have an established system to monitor the prolonged sick leave of its NCSC staff. In Audit's view, the FEHD may benefit from such a system, as it will facilitate monitoring by the senior management and will ensure consistency among the leave registries in handling cases of prolonged sick leave. The FEHD may need to seek the CSB's advice if it encounters difficulties in establishing the system.

2.53 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene should:**

- (a) **put in place arrangements for timely identifying cases of prolonged sick leave of civil service staff and convening Medical Boards in compliance with the CSRs;**
- (b) **where it is considered inappropriate, impracticable or unnecessary to convene a Medical Board, timely seek the CSB's approval to grant sick leave without consulting a Medical Board;**
- (c) **where a Medical Board has not stated in its report whether any further sick leave beyond 91 or 182 days should be granted, seek clarification from the Board before granting further sick leave to the officer concerned; and**
- (d) **consider the need to establish a system to monitor the prolonged sick leave of NCSC staff, and seek the CSB's advice where appropriate.**

Response from the Administration

2.54 The **Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene** agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:

- (a) the FEHD will put in place arrangements to ensure the timely identification of prolonged sick leave cases for which Medical Boards may need to be convened. At the end of the 60th day of prolonged sick leave, the leave registry will start to monitor the case to determine in anticipation whether a Medical Board needs to be convened at the expiry of the 91 days and, if so, start to consider taking appropriate follow-up actions in compliance with the CSRs;

- (b) the leave registries will be instructed to take timely actions to seek the CSB's approval to grant sick leave without consulting a Medical Board, where it is considered inappropriate, impracticable or unnecessary to convene a Medical Board;
- (c) the leave registries will be instructed to examine Medical Board recommendations meticulously and seek clarification from the Board where necessary; and
- (d) the sick leave of NCSC staff is granted in accordance with the Employment Ordinance (Note 10). From September 2010, the FEHD aims to extend the use of eLAPS for NCSC staff as far as possible (see para. 2.10(h)). The FEHD will monitor the leave applications of the NCSC staff electronically or administratively, and consult the CSB where appropriate.

Note 10: *The Employment Ordinance specifies that paid sickness days are accumulated at the rate of two days for each month of the employee's employment during the first 12 months, and four days for each month thereafter. They can be accumulated up to 120 days which are divided into two categories: (a) 36 days in Category 1 which require medical certificate from a registered medical practitioner or dentist; and (b) thereafter 84 days in Category 2 which require medical certificate from a hospital doctor or dentist attending the employee as an out-patient or in-patient in a hospital.*

PART 3: MANAGEMENT OF LEAVE IN THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT

3.1 This PART examines issues relating to the management of leave in the HD. The following issues are discussed:

- (a) leave management systems (paras. 3.4 to 3.9);
- (b) leave application and approval (paras. 3.10 to 3.18);
- (c) leave recording (paras. 3.19 to 3.24);
- (d) monitoring of the level of sick leave (paras. 3.25 to 3.33);
- (e) management of frequent sick leave (paras. 3.34 to 3.40);
- (f) management of frequent time-off (paras. 3.41 to 3.44);
- (g) management of prolonged sick leave (paras. 3.45 to 3.49); and
- (h) vacation leave entitlements of contract staff (paras. 3.50 to 3.54).

Staff strength of Housing Department

3.2 The HD acts as the executive arm of the Hong Kong Housing Authority, which is a statutory organisation tasked to develop and implement a public housing programme to help the Government achieve its policy objective on public housing. As at 31 March 2010, the HD had a strength of 8,450 staff, comprising 7,480 civil servants and 970 contract staff. The contract staff are employed under arrangements approved by the Hong Kong Housing Authority, and such arrangements fall outside the NCSC scheme (see para. 1.8 — Note 11). They are hereinafter referred to as the Housing Authority (HA) contract staff.

3.3 The day-to-day administration of matters relating to leave is handled mainly by the HD's three personnel registries. Respectively, they form part of the Personnel Sub-section of the Corporate Services Division, the Divisional Administration Secretariat of the Estate Management Division, and the Divisional Administration Secretariat of the Development and Construction Division.

Note 11: *According to the CSB, it is for the Hong Kong Housing Authority to determine these contract staff's remuneration package (including leave), and for the HD to formulate the leave management system. The CSB rules and guidelines on the administration of leave for civil servants (or NCSC staff) are not directly applicable to these contract staff, although it is up to the Hong Kong Housing Authority and the HD to make reference to them in devising their own system and practices.*

Leave management systems

3.4 *e-Leave System for civil servants.* The HD uses the CSB-developed e-Leave System (which comprises eLAPS and the LRCS — see paras. 2.3 to 2.5) for recording various types of leave taken by its civil service staff. eLAPS supports electronic applications for vacation and sick leave.

3.5 *Contract staff.* For HA contract staff, the Human Resource Management Information System (HRMIS), developed in 2001 by the HD, provides functions for leave application, processing, recording and calculation, as follows:

- (a) *Leave application and processing.* HA contract staff may submit vacation leave applications electronically through the HRMIS for processing by approving officers. The HRMIS does not support electronic applications for other types of leave; and
- (b) *Leave recording and calculation.* The HRMIS directly captures the leave data after a vacation leave application is submitted and approved electronically. Where an HA contract staff applies for vacation leave, or leave of another type, by submitting an application form, the approving officer passes the approved form to the personnel registry. The personnel registry records the leave in the HRMIS by on-line inputting the leave details contained in the form.

Audit observations and recommendations

3.6 *e-Leave System.* Apart from the lower efficiency and higher staff cost, the processing of leave applications in paper form is also more susceptible to input errors. This poses a risk of unrecorded or incorrectly recorded leave. Audit found that, in 2009-10, 84% of the vacation leave applications and 62% of the sick leave applications of HD civil service staff were submitted electronically. This suggests that there is scope for increasing usage in this regard.

3.7 *HRMIS.* Audit found that, in 2009-10, only 18% of the vacation leave applications of HA contract staff were submitted electronically through the HRMIS. Apparently, there is plenty of scope for increasing usage in this regard to enhance efficiency and reduce the risk of recording errors. Furthermore, Audit noted the following issues relating to the HRMIS:

- (a) *Limitations on electronic leave applications.* Only vacation leave applications could be submitted through the HRMIS. Such applications had to be submitted at least one day in advance (e.g. an application for a half-day afternoon leave

could not be submitted in the morning of the same day). Furthermore, unlike eLAPS, the HRMIS did not provide a function for applicants to withdraw applications;

- (b) ***Inadequate management reports.*** The HRMIS only provided reports on the leave taken by individual staff. Unlike the e-Leave System, the HRMIS did not provide other reports to facilitate effective leave management (e.g. analyses of sick leave taken by staff of different ranks, units or sections for identifying problem areas); and
- (c) ***Long outstanding enhancement/maintenance requests.*** As at 30 June 2010, there were seven user requests for system enhancement/maintenance which were outstanding. Five of them, including three considered by the HD as high-priority requests, had been outstanding for over five years.

In response to the above audit observations, the HD informed Audit that following up on an internal audit (Note 12) conducted in 2009, the HD had reviewed the usage of the HRMIS on vacation leave applications, and found that the low usage was due mainly to the system's limitations and lack of user-friendliness.

3.8 Audit has recommended that the Director of Housing should:

- (a) **take measures to increase the use of eLAPS for submitting and processing leave applications electronically;**
- (b) **consider taking measures to increase the use of the HRMIS for submitting and processing leave applications electronically, including enhancing the HRMIS to address the limitations on electronic leave applications;**
- (c) **consider enhancing the HRMIS to provide additional leave reports to facilitate effective leave management; and**
- (d) **expedite action to deal with the seven outstanding enhancement/maintenance requests for the HRMIS, especially the three high-priority requests.**

Note 12: *According to the internal audit report dated August 2009, the scope of the internal audit covered the procedures and internal controls for leave management. It covered the leave applied or taken in January 2007 to December 2008. The internal audit concluded that key procedures and controls for leave management were in place, with room for improvement in some areas.*

Response from the Administration

3.9 The **Director of Housing** agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:

- (a) to promote the wider use of eLAPS, the HD will continue to encourage civil servants and their supervisors to use eLAPS as far as practicable. Reminders will be issued quarterly. The HD is also reviewing those cases of paper applications to find out whether there are any specific reasons/patterns for preferring paper applications, so as to work out effective measures to promote the wider use of eLAPS;
- (b) in May 2010, the HD started to issue periodic reminders to encourage wider use of the HRMIS for vacation leave application. It has also taken steps to enhance the functions and user-friendliness of the HRMIS. For instance, in August 2010, application functions were enhanced to enable HA contract staff to apply for urgent half-day afternoon leave in the morning. The HD is also considering whether the system should be further upgraded to introduce new functions (such as sick leave application and withdrawal of applications), or a replacement system is more cost-effective in the long run;
- (c) the HRMIS is being enhanced to modify one existing report and produce four additional reports to show details of sick leave taken by individual staff and sick leave statistics on HA contract staff within a specified period. The work will be completed in late 2010; and
- (d) out of the seven outstanding enhancement/maintenance requests, six will be completed by October 2010. The HD will expedite action in dealing with the outstanding requests. The HRMIS Maintenance Working Group will henceforth review outstanding enhancement/maintenance requests monthly with a view to stepping up management control.

Leave application and approval

3.10 Effective leave management requires supervisors to ensure that their staff submit leave applications as early as practicable, particularly for leave of long duration, in order to facilitate the making of necessary arrangements for maintaining operational effectiveness. Regarding maternity leave, which normally lasts for 10 weeks, CSR 1297(4) provides that an officer must make an application not later than three months before the expected date of confinement. The officer is required to produce a medical certificate confirming her pregnancy and specifying the expected date of confinement.

Audit observations and recommendations

Need to submit leave applications as early as practicable

3.11 Audit's examination of the leave applications revealed the following issues:

- (a) ***Vacation leave.*** In 2009-10, of the 183,900 applications submitted through eLAPS, 16,200 applications were submitted after the leave commencement date. In particular, 99 applications were submitted 10 days or more after the leave commencement date; and
- (b) ***Maternity leave.*** Audit's sample check of 50 cases of maternity leave in 2007-08 to 2009-10 found delays (ranging from 3 to 72 days) in 17 cases in the application for maternity leave, contrary to CSR 1297(4).

3.12 The early submission and approval of leave applications facilitates the making of necessary arrangements for maintaining operational effectiveness. It also reduces the risk of staff omitting to submit leave applications after the leave has been taken, and the resultant unrecorded leave. In Audit's view, the HD needs to regularly remind leave applicants to apply for leave as early as practicable and, in particular, to comply with CSR 1297(4) where maternity leave is involved. The HD also needs to regularly remind approving officers to ensure the early submission of leave applications by their subordinates.

Need to ensure prompt processing of leave applications

3.13 Where a leave application submitted electronically through eLAPS has not been processed by the approving officer, it will be treated as an outstanding application and will not be recorded as leave in the LRCS. Audit's examination of a list of outstanding applications, as at 2 March 2010, revealed that 32 leave applications had been outstanding for more than 20 days since their submission. In particular, eight applications had been outstanding for over four years. In April 2010, after Audit brought this to its attention, the HD reviewed these 32 cases and rectified the leave records of the officers concerned. In Audit's view, the HD needs to monitor the outstanding leave applications not recorded in the LRCS to ensure that leave applications are processed promptly.

Need to grant sick leave in accordance with CSRs

3.14 The CSRs stipulate various requirements on the granting of sick leave. In particular, under CSR 1273(4), an officer who has commenced leave of other types is not eligible for the granting of sick leave until his approved leave expires. Audit's examination of the leave records of 50 officers for 2007-08 to 2009-10 revealed three cases in which the officers applied for sick leave while on vacation leave. In one case, the HD rejected the

application. However, in the other two cases (involving half a day and three days respectively), the HD cancelled the officers' vacation leave and approved their sick leave applications, contrary to CSR 1273(4). In Audit's view, the HD needs to review the two cases and take necessary rectification actions. The HD also needs to take measures to ensure that CSR 1273(4) is complied with in granting sick leave.

Need to grant time-off in accordance with guidelines

3.15 According to the CSB guidelines, time-off for medical treatment, examination or consultation granted under CSR 904 (see para. 1.5) should be less than half a day. Sick leave should be taken where such absence is of half a day or more. In this regard, the HD guidelines also state that for officers working on shifts and where the medical appointment straddles across the meal breaks, the time-off granted should be less than four hours.

3.16 Audit examined 1,800 cases of time-off granted in 2009-10 to the staff of 10 Sections. Audit found that in 31 cases, time-off of more than half a day, or more than four hours, had been granted, contrary to the CSB or HD guidelines. In Audit's view, the HD needs to review these 31 cases and take necessary rectification actions. The HD also needs to take measures to ensure that the CSB and HD guidelines are followed in granting time-off.

Audit recommendations

3.17 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Housing should:**

- (a) **regularly remind leave applicants to apply for leave as early as practicable and, in particular, to comply with CSR 1297(4) where maternity leave is involved;**
- (b) **regularly remind approving officers to ensure the early submission of leave applications by their subordinates;**
- (c) **monitor the outstanding leave applications not recorded in the LRCS to ensure that leave applications are processed promptly;**
- (d) **review the two cases in which the officers were granted sick leave while on vacation leave as identified by Audit and take necessary rectification actions;**
- (e) **remind approving officers of the need to comply with CSR 1273(4) (i.e. an officer who has commenced leave of other types is not eligible for the granting of sick leave until his approved leave expires);**

- (f) review the 31 cases in which the officers were granted time-off of more than half a day, or more than four hours, for medical treatment, examination or consultation, contrary to the CSB or HD guidelines, and take necessary rectification actions; and
- (g) take measures to ensure that the CSB and HD guidelines are followed in granting time-off to the staff.

Response from the Administration

3.18 The **Director of Housing** agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:

Submitting leave applications as early as practicable

- (a) since September 2009, the HD has issued reminders quarterly to all staff on the requirement under CSR 1297(4). In May 2010, additional guidelines were issued to ensure the timely submission of maternity leave applications;
- (b) the HD has issued a reminder to all staff and approving officers about the need to apply for vacation leave as early as practicable. Reminders will be issued quarterly;

Ensuring prompt processing of leave applications

- (c) at present, approving officers receive an eLAPS-generated email weekly reminding them of leave applications pending their processing. The personnel registries will monitor the position more closely and issue further reminders to approving officers to ensure timely processing. Any prolonged outstanding case will be brought up to the attention of the Section Head concerned (or where appropriate, a higher level) with a view to ensuring its completion within a month or before the leave commencement date, whichever is earlier;

Granting sick leave in accordance with CSRs

- (d) the two cases in which the officers were granted sick leave while on vacation leave have been reviewed and rectified;
- (e) the HD has issued a reminder to staff and approving officers about the need to comply with CSR 1273(4). Reminders will be issued quarterly. Further guidelines will also be issued to the personnel registries to ensure proper case processing in future;

Granting time-off in accordance with guidelines

- (f) the HD is reviewing the 31 cases in which the officers were granted time-off of more than half a day, or more than four hours. The review will be completed, and the cases rectified where appropriate, by October 2010; and
- (g) following up on the 2009 internal audit (see Note 12 to para. 3.7), the HD has, since September 2009, issued reminders quarterly to all staff on the need to follow guidelines on the granting of time-off. Since January 2010, to strengthen management control and ensure proper recording, the HD has also set a standard spreadsheet format for individual Sections to complete their control registers. Action is also in hand to refine the time-off application form, in order to facilitate supervisors to observe the relevant guidelines in processing time-off applications.

Leave recording

3.19 *Random checks of leave records.* As mentioned in paragraph 2.17, the CSB guidelines state that, in order to ensure input and calculation accuracy of leave records, and prevent omission and unauthorised amendments, departments should arrange to conduct random checks of leave records in the e-Leave System at least once every three months.

Audit observations and recommendations

Need to conduct random checks of leave records

3.20 Audit reviewed how the three personnel registries conducted their random checks of leave records for 2007-08 to 2009-10. Audit found instances of non-compliance with the CSB guidelines, as follows:

- (a) one registry did not conduct any checks;
- (b) another registry only checked the leave applications submitted electronically through eLAPS, but not those submitted in paper form; and
- (c) for the remaining registry, there were delays in conducting the checks. For example, it did not complete checking the leave records for the first quarter of 2009 until September 2009.

In Audit's view, the HD needs to take measures to ensure that all the three personnel registries conduct random checks of leave records in compliance with the CSB guidelines.

Need to ensure proper recording of study leave and time-off

3.21 **Study leave.** As mentioned in paragraph 1.7, CSRs 1001 and 1002 provide that study leave may be granted to officers to undertake full-time training, or to prepare and sit for examination. Such study leave is not counted as the officers' service for vacation leave earning purposes. Audit's sample check of 100 cases of study leave in 2007-08 to 2009-10 found that a one-day study leave taken by one officer and a half-day study leave taken by another officer had not been recorded in the LRCS. The HD needs to rectify the two cases, and take improvement measures to ensure the proper recording of study leave.

3.22 **Time-off.** The HD guidelines state that Section/Unit Heads should keep a control register of time-off granted for medical treatment, examination or consultation. They should use the control register to compile quarterly statistics on the time-off granted for management review. Audit's cross-check of the control registers of two Sections and 194 approved time-off applications for 2009-10 found that 11 cases of time-off had not been recorded in the control registers. The HD needs to rectify the 11 cases, and take improvement measures to ensure the proper recording of time-off.

Audit recommendations

- 3.23 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Housing should:**
- (a) **take measures to ensure that all the three personnel registries conduct random checks of leave records in compliance with the CSB guidelines;**
 - (b) **rectify the two cases of unrecorded study leave and 11 cases of unrecorded time-off for medical treatment, examination or consultation, as identified by Audit; and**
 - (c) **take improvement measures to ensure that study leave and time-off are recorded properly.**

Response from the Administration

3.24 The **Director of Housing** agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:

- (a) the three personnel registries have been reminded of the need to conduct random checks. Reminders will be issued quarterly. The registries are also required to report completion of random checks henceforth;

- (b) all identified cases of unrecorded study leave and time-off have been properly recorded; and
- (c) in January 2010, a control register in spreadsheet format was introduced to facilitate Sections to properly record the granting of time-off. To ensure proper recording of study leave and time-off, the personnel registries will henceforth conduct random checks and report completion of such checks.

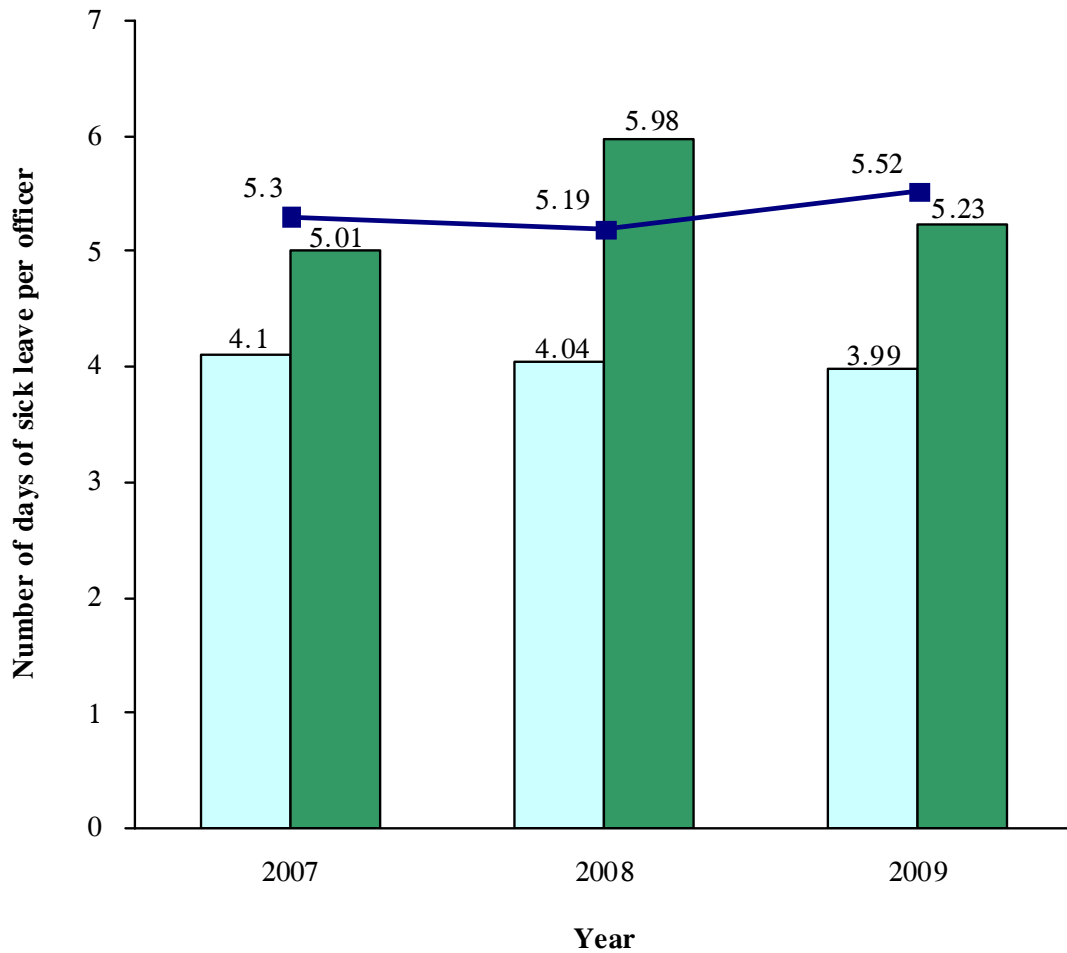
Monitoring of the level of sick leave

3.25 *CSB guidelines.* As mentioned in paragraph 2.26, according to the CSB guidelines on the management of sick leave of civil servants, each department may consider setting up a central system to monitor the sick leave of its staff at different levels (i.e. individual officers, individual units/sections, individual ranks and the department as a whole). A regular analysis of the sick leave of the staff may help in identifying the problem areas (e.g. possible abuse and factors undermining occupational safety and health).

3.26 *Sick leave levels.* Figure 2 shows a comparison of the annual sick leave levels, for 2007 to 2009, of HD civil service staff, HA contract staff and civil servants as a whole.

Figure 2

Sick leave levels of HD/HA staff
and those of civil servants as a whole
(2007 to 2009)



- Legend:
- Sick leave level of civil servants as a whole
 - Sick leave level of HD civil service staff
 - Sick leave level of HA contract staff

Source: CSB and HD records, and Audit's analysis of sick leave of HA contract staff as recorded in HRMIS (see para. 3.7(b))

3.27 Figure 2 shows that:

- (a) ***HD civil service staff.*** For 2007 to 2009, the sick leave levels of HD civil service staff ranged from 3.99 to 4.1 days per officer and averaged 4.04 days. These were lower than those of civil servants as a whole, which ranged from 5.19 to 5.52 days per officer and averaged 5.34 days; and
- (b) ***HA contract staff.*** For 2007 to 2009, the sick leave levels of HA contract staff ranged from 5.01 to 5.98 days per officer and averaged 5.41 days. The average (5.41 days), while in line with that of civil servants as a whole (5.34 days), was 34% higher than the average of HD civil service staff (4.04 days).

3.28 Table 3 shows, for three ranks, a comparison of the 2009 sick leave levels of HD civil service staff and those of HA contract staff.

Table 3

**Comparison of sick leave levels of
HD civil service staff and those of HA contract staff
(2009)**

Civil service rank/ Comparable contract staff rank	Civil service staff	Contract staff	
	Sick leave level (a) (Days per officer)	Sick leave level (b) (Days per officer)	Sick leave level as a percentage of that of civil service staff $(c) = \frac{(b)}{(a)} \times 100\%$
Personal Secretary II/ Personal Secretary 2	3.19	8.64	271%
Assistant Clerical Officer/ General Clerk	6.64	7.65	115%
Clerical Assistant/ Assistant General Clerk	7.39	4.54	61%

Source: HD records and Audit's analysis of sick leave of HA contract staff as recorded in HRMIS (see para. 3.7(b))

Audit observations and recommendations

3.29 As shown in Figure 2, the sick leave level of HA contract staff was, in general, higher than that of HD civil service staff. Audit's analysis in Table 3 shows that the sick leave levels of different ranks of contract staff could vary significantly. For example, in the case of Personal Secretary 2, each contract staff on average took 8.64 days of sick leave in 2009, representing 271% of that of her counterpart in the HD civil service staff. However, the reverse occurred for the rank of Assistant General Clerk, in which case the sick leave level of contract staff was lower, representing 61% only of that of their counterparts in the HD civil service staff.

3.30 Similarly, Audit found that the sick leave levels of some ranks of HD civil service staff were significantly higher than those of other ranks. For example, in 2009, the sick leave levels for the ranks of Foreman and Office Assistant were 8.41 and 10.22 days per officer respectively, which were significantly higher than the average sick leave level of 3.99 days for all ranks.

3.31 The audit findings in paragraphs 3.29 and 3.30 highlight the need for regular analyses of the sick leave of both civil service and contract staff at different levels (e.g. individual sections or ranks) to identify possible problem areas.

3.32 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Housing should:**

- (a) **regularly conduct analyses of the sick leave of civil service staff and contract staff at different levels (e.g. individual sections or ranks); and**
- (b) **where the sick leave level of civil service or contract staff for, say, a particular section or rank is unreasonably high, ascertain the causes with a view to taking appropriate actions to reduce or contain it.**

Response from the Administration

3.33 The **Director of Housing** agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:

- (a) apart from bringing up individual cases of high sick leave levels for review, the HD does regularly monitor the sick leave levels of its staff to see if they are reasonable. For HD civil service staff, the sick leave levels have been consistently below the civil service averages over the past three years. For more in-depth analysis, the HD has commenced a review on the level of sick leave taken by its civil service staff of different ranks. Similar reviews will also be conducted for sick leave taken by HA contract staff, when the additional reports in the HRMIS are ready in late 2010 (see para. 3.9(c)); and
- (b) specifically, the HD has also looked at the reason for the high sick leave level of the rank of Personal Secretary 2 in 2009 (see para. 3.29). This was mainly attributable to three prolonged sick leave cases which involved the taking of sick leave from 43.5 to 52 days. The HD is closely monitoring these cases.

Management of frequent sick leave

3.34 **CSB guidelines.** As mentioned in paragraph 2.35, the CSB guidelines on the management of sick leave of civil servants state that departments should set trigger points for reviewing officer's sick leave. For an officer taking frequent sick leave, early monitoring action should be taken. Where necessary, the officer should be required to produce a medical certificate for sick leave irrespective of the duration. Where there are indications of abuse of sick leave, the officer should be required to produce a medical certificate issued by a designated government or Hospital Authority clinic or medical officer every time he applies for sick leave, or be examined by a Medical Board. The follow-up action should be reviewed frequently, and consideration should be given to stepping up the action or taking other actions if necessary.

3.35 **HD guidelines.** The HD guidelines state that where a civil service or contract staff has taken nine or more days of sick leave within any three consecutive months, the personnel registry should bring up the case and advise his supervisor for review and appropriate action.

Audit observations and recommendations

3.36 The setting of a trigger point is an effective management tool to facilitate consideration in good time of appropriate follow-up action on possible abuse cases or assistance to the staff concerned, such as redeployment or posting arrangement having regard to the officer's health condition. However, Audit's examination of the relevant files (for position up to March 2010) revealed that there was room for improvement in the management of frequent sick leave using the trigger point. The audit findings are at paragraphs 3.37 and 3.38.

3.37 **Trigger point not applied.** During November 2007 to March 2010, one of the three personnel registries did not bring up cases with sick leave exceeding the trigger point to supervisors for action, contrary to the HD guidelines.

3.38 **No evidence of action taken.** For the other two personnel registries, Audit found that:

- (a) for no documented reasons, some cases with sick leave exceeding the trigger point were not brought up to supervisors for action. For example, in March 2010, there were about 40 such cases; and

- (b) in 2009-10, each month the registries brought up on average some 70 cases (with sick leave exceeding the trigger point) to supervisors for action. However, in 94% of these cases, the supervisors did not provide feedback to the registries regarding whether they had taken any action.

3.39 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Housing should:**

- (a) **regularly remind the three personnel registries to bring up cases with sick leave exceeding the trigger point to supervisors for review and appropriate action, in compliance with the HD guidelines; and**
- (b) **take measures to ensure that supervisors review and take appropriate action on cases of frequent sick leave brought up to them.**

Response from the Administration

3.40 The **Director of Housing** agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:

- (a) the three personnel registries have been reminded to comply with the relevant guidelines and bring up cases with sick leave exceeding the trigger point to supervisors monthly. The Headquarters will issue reminders to the personnel registries quarterly; and
- (b) in April 2010, following up on the 2009 internal audit, the HD updated its guidelines on the taking and management of sick leave. Approving officers are required to properly document the findings of each review on a prescribed form to be forwarded to the corresponding personnel registry for record. They are also required to bring up suspected abuse cases, along with the review documents, to the Staff Management Sub-section in the Headquarters for appropriate follow-up action.

Management of frequent time-off

3.41 **CSB guidelines.** As mentioned in paragraph 2.43, the CSB guidelines state that, for effective management and monitoring, departmental management should keep proper record of time-off granted for medical treatment, examination or consultation as appropriate. Departmental management should pay particular attention to cases involving frequent applications for time-off. Where necessary, they may consider setting trigger points to facilitate monitoring.

Audit observations and recommendations

3.42 With effect from the last quarter of 2009, Section/Unit Heads have been required to compile quarterly statistics on the time-off granted to civil service and contract staff for management review. Audit's examination of these statistics revealed that, in the last quarter of 2009 and the first quarter of 2010, 81 and 55 officers respectively took time-off on 12 or more occasions, which, in Audit's view, may warrant follow-up actions. However, Audit notes that the HD has not set a trigger point in respect of time-off for taking follow-up actions.

3.43 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Housing should:**

- (a) **monitor the time-off for medical treatment, examination or consultation granted to HD civil service staff and HA contract staff, paying particular attention to cases involving frequent applications for time-off; and**
- (b) **consider setting a trigger point to facilitate time-off monitoring.**

Response from the Administration

3.44 The **Director of Housing** agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:

- (a) since January 2010, as a follow-up on the 2009 internal audit, the HD has invited quarterly returns from Section Heads on the time-off granted. Sections with relatively high time-off figures have been invited to conduct detailed reviews; and
- (b) the HD will observe the findings from the quarterly returns and the subsequent reviews conducted by the Sections for a longer period of time. This will provide a full-year pattern for making a more informed decision in February 2011 on whether and, if so, how a trigger point should be set.

Management of prolonged sick leave

3.45 **Medical Boards.** As mentioned in paragraphs 2.49 and 2.50, Heads of Department are authorised to approve only up to 91 consecutive days of sick leave for civil servants. For sick leave beyond 91 days, the advice of a Medical Board has to be sought. In circumstances where the Head of Department considers it inappropriate, impracticable or unnecessary to convene a Medical Board and that the granting of further sick leave is fully justified, exceptional approval may be sought from the CSB to grant sick leave without consulting a Medical Board.

Audit observations and recommendations

3.46 *Prolonged sick leave of civil servants.* Audit's sample check of 20 cases of prolonged sick leave (over 91 consecutive days) in 2007-08 to 2009-10 revealed areas for improvement in managing such cases, as follows:

- (a) *Medical Board not convened.* In one case, in response to the HD's request for convening a Medical Board, the Hospital Authority provided the HD with a medical report prepared by a doctor based on the officer's medical records. The HD granted further sick leave without taking follow-up action to request convening a Medical Board;
- (b) *Delays in seeking exemption from convening Medical Boards.* In two cases, there were delays of three months in seeking the CSB's approval for exemption from convening Medical Boards (i.e. counting from the date the officer had been granted 91 consecutive days of sick leave); and
- (c) *Delays in arranging for convening of Medical Boards.* In 11 cases, there were delays of 1 to 15 months in requesting the Hospital Authority to appoint a Medical Board (i.e. counting from the date the officer had been granted 91 or 182 consecutive days of sick leave). The average delay was three months.

3.47 *Prolonged sick leave of contract staff.* The HD does not have an established system to monitor the prolonged sick leave of HA contract staff. In Audit's view, the HD may benefit from such a system, as it will facilitate monitoring by the senior management and will ensure consistency among the personnel registries in handling cases of prolonged sick leave.

3.48 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Housing should:**

- (a) **put in place arrangements for timely identifying cases of prolonged sick leave of civil service staff and convening Medical Boards in compliance with the CSRs;**
- (b) **where it is considered inappropriate, impracticable or unnecessary to convene a Medical Board, timely seek the CSB's approval to grant sick leave without consulting a Medical Board; and**
- (c) **consider the need to establish a system to monitor the prolonged sick leave of HA contract staff.**

Response from the Administration

3.49 The **Director of Housing** agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:

- (a) a set of departmental procedures for identifying and monitoring possible prolonged sick leave cases, and convening Medical Boards timely, was issued in November 2009 (and updated in June 2010) for compliance by the three personnel registries. The procedures will be re-circulated to the registries half-yearly; and
- (b) a system to monitor and manage the prolonged sick leave of HA contract staff has been worked out for staff consultation. Detailed implementation guidelines will be developed and issued by late 2010.

Vacation leave entitlements of contract staff

3.50 According to the Memorandum on Conditions of Service for HA Contract Staff:

- (a) compared with those with less than five years of service, contract staff with five or more years of service are entitled to two or three more days of vacation leave per year; and
- (b) “years of service” refers to years of continuous employment, except under temporary terms of employment.

3.51 Audit found that, as at June 2010, an issue relating to the counting of the years of service, identified by the HD in July 2004, had not yet been resolved. The key events are as follows:

- (a) **July 2004.** A question was raised by a personnel registry as to whether a contract staff’s past service as a temporary staff should be included in counting his years of service;
- (b) **November 2005.** The Contract Staff Policies Sub-section expressed the view that such past service should not be included. In response to the registry’s enquiry as to whether rectification actions should be taken in cases where such past service had been included, the Contract Staff Policies Sub-section stated that more information should be obtained (e.g. the number of contract staff and number of leave days involved) for consideration; and

- (c) **December 2007.** Following the registry's follow-up enquiry in October 2007, the Contract Staff Policies Sub-section reaffirmed that any service on a temporary basis should not be included, and advised the registry to consider taking rectification actions. No further progress was made up to June 2010.

Audit observations and recommendations

3.52 In July 2010, after Audit brought the issue to its attention, the HD rectified the leave balances of seven contract staff, whose past services as temporary staff had been incorrectly included in counting their years of service for determining their vacation leave entitlements.

3.53 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Housing should:**

- (a) **ascertain whether there were other contract staff whose past services as temporary staff had been incorrectly included in counting their years of service for determining their vacation leave entitlements, and take prompt rectification actions; and**
- (b) **take measures to ensure that, in counting the years of service of a contract staff for determining his vacation leave entitlement, his past service as a temporary staff, if any, is not included.**

Response from the Administration

3.54 The **Director of Housing** agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:

- (a) the HD has checked its records thoroughly and found no similar cases; and
- (b) guidelines on the proper calculation method of contract staff's years of service have been issued to the personnel registries, and will be re-circulated half-yearly.

Vacation leave entitlements of civil servants

1. Officers appointed before 1 June 2000 (Note 1)

Category of officers	Vacation leave per year of service (Day)	Vacation leave accumulation limit (Day)
<i>Officers with less than 10 years of service</i>		
On Directorate Pay Scale Point 4 or above, or equivalent	55.5	365
Below Directorate Pay Scale Point 4 or on Master Pay Scale Point 14 or above, or equivalent	31	120
Below Master Pay Scale Point 14, or equivalent	22	60
On Model Scale 1 (permanent terms)	14	50
On Model Scale 1 (others)	14	45
<i>Officers with 10 years of service or more</i>		
On Directorate Pay Scale Point 4 or above, or equivalent	55.5	365
Below Directorate Pay Scale Point 4 or on Master Pay Scale Point 14 or above, or equivalent	40.5	180
Below Master Pay Scale Point 14, or equivalent	31	120
On Model Scale 1 (permanent terms)	22	100
On Model Scale 1 (others)	22	90

2. Officers appointed on or after 1 June 2000 (Note 2)

Category of officers	Vacation leave per year of service (Day)	Vacation leave accumulation limit (Day)
<i>Officers with less than 10 years of service</i>		
On Directorate Pay Scale, or equivalent	22	44
On Master Pay Scale Point 14 or above, or equivalent	18	36
Below Master Pay Scale Point 14 or on Model Scale 1, or equivalent	14	28
<i>Officers with 10 years of service or more</i>		
On Directorate Pay Scale, or equivalent	26	52
On Master Pay Scale Point 14 or above, or equivalent	22	44
Below Master Pay Scale Point 14 or on Model Scale 1, or equivalent	18	36

Source: CSRs

Note 1: Officers appointed before 1 June 2000 on different terms have different vacation leave entitlements. Item 1 above shows the most common leave benefits terms for officers appointed before 1 June 2000.

Note 2: Since 1 June 2000, new sets of terms of appointment and conditions of service have been offered to new appointees.

Remarks: 1. An officer will not earn further vacation leave once his vacation leave balance reaches the leave accumulation limit and so long as it remains at the limit.

2. Officers appointed before 1 August 1987 are permitted to put aside up to 30 days of their vacation leave balance as at 1 August 1987 into a "sinking balance". The sinking balance is not counted as part of the vacation leave balance for determining whether the leave accumulation limit is reached. Leave in the sinking balance may be taken in the usual manner, but no replenishment of the leave taken from the sinking balance is permitted.

Acronyms and abbreviations

Audit	Audit Commission
CSB	Civil Service Bureau
CSR	Civil Service Regulation
eLAPS	Electronic Leave Application and Processing System
FEHD	Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
HA	Housing Authority
HD	Housing Department
HRMIS	Human Resource Management Information System
LRCS	Leave Recording and Calculation System
NCSC	Non-civil service contract