

**Report of the Assistant Director Adult Provision & Modernisation**

**HASS Attendance Management Project 2007-2009:– Information Only Update Report**

**Summary**

1. To inform the Organisational Effectiveness Scrutiny Committee of the approach taken by the HASS Attendance Management Steering Group that resulted in a 50% reduction in absence levels in adult social care.

**Background & Context**

2. Absence levels within HASS adult social care were unacceptably high with an 06/07 outturn of 21.1 days lost per FTE employee compared with a corporate average of 12.2 days and an average of 13 days for other adult social care providers. In 2007 there appeared to be a number of factors generally contributing to these high levels of absence:
  - a. Operational managers lacked confidence in managing absence
  - b. Low staff morale
  - c. Insufficient focus on the largest causes of absence , slips, trip and falls, stress and musculoskeletal injuries
3. A project was launched and co-ordinated by an Attendance Management Steering Group which had the following membership:
  - Head of Corporate Services (Chair)
  - Senior HR Business Partner
  - Assistant HR Adviser (HR project link)
  - Corporate HR link (to be identified)
  - HASS Health and Safety representative
  - Line Management representative from Housing, Adult Services and Learning Disabilities (to be agreed)
  - Trade Union representative
  - Employee Group representative (to be agreed)
  - Occupational Health representative (attendance on an ad hoc basis)
  - HSE representative (attendance on an ad hoc basis)
  - Corporate HR link specifically in relation to the incorporation of Leadership and Management Standards (attendance on an ad hoc basis)

4. The key activities of the steering group in September 2007 were as follows:
  - i. To Coordinate the overall approach to attendance management to include ;
    - Receive any planned activity to address attendance and focus on individual service areas
    - Review the use of AHP and the development of the DELPHI system
    - Implementation of corporate policies and the ability to contribute to development of corporate policy
    - Contribute to the re-tendering of the Corporate Occupational Health Service and monitoring our ongoing use and quality of service we received.
    - Manage the work in conjunction with the HSE for a healthy workplace
    - Adopt a coordinated approach on sickness absence. Thereafter the HR project coordinator will provide regular information and support when considering appropriate action.
    - Receive regular performance reports and monitor progress on absence levels
    - Consider training and development issues
    - This project will take an evidence based approach and draw on the regional Sickness Absence Consortium research.
5. At that time HASS DMT approved the funding to release one FTE Assistant HR Advisor to focus on Attendance Management initiatives within HASS.
6. Concern was also raised by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) around sickness absence related to stress within HASS and so the process of rolling out the HSE Stress Management Standards as a pilot within HASS also formed part of this project.
7. The project formally commenced on 1st October 2007, and presented a progress report to DMT on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2008, on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2008 and a final report in January 2009.
8. The outturn for 2007/8 to 31/3/08 was 13.66 days lost per FTE employee which was a reduction of 35%. The majority of the reduction came in long term absence and the reduction was attributed to:
  - HR working closely with individual managers to tackle long term absence.
  - Increased monitoring and control of short term absences.

- Increased management information, resulting in quick notification of absence issues, for example, trigger points.
- Targeted focus on mandatory training (eg. Manual handling)

9. The table below outlined the operational sickness absence work undertaken by the HR team in Quarter 2 and 3 of 2008.

	<b>1<sup>st</sup> July-31<sup>st</sup> December 2008 (Quarter 2 and 3)</b>
<b>Referrals to Occupational Health</b>	58
<b>Ill Health Retirements</b>	1 (At tier 3 level)
<b>Absence hearings resulting in dismissal</b>	2
<b>Short term sickness – trigger point advice to managers</b>	21
<b>Supported phased returns to work following LTS</b>	14

10. Whilst the number of activities shows some indication of the HR workload, the complexity and amount of HR input required varied from case to case.
11. By January 2009, 81 employees were logged by HR in the formal short term absence procedure. Managers were being supported by HR in the management of this process, with the aim to increase the attendance of those staff by identifying any underlying issues. Following awareness raising work and focus group sessions held in July 2008, some major pieces of work were conducted into some of the immediate issues raised. These included investigations into bullying and harassment and issues relating to the working culture.
12. One element of the overall work focussed on the steps taken to implement the HSE Stress Management Standards, which included the following actions:
- Considered the data available (including questionnaires and the focus groups held with front line staff) to indicate any potential problem areas
  - Identifying causes of stress and finding solutions in staff focus groups
  - More detailed action plan in response to focus group members
  - Evaluation of the action plans and whether the actions resulted in positive outcomes
13. The levels of stress related absence increased slightly as expected following the awareness raising sessions but quickly began to reduce perhaps as a result of the awareness raising and solution focused staff forums.

## Consultation

14. n/a

## Options

15. n/a

## Corporate Strategy

16. The project was designed to demonstrate progress on achieving the council's corporate strategy (2008-12) and the priorities set out in it.

## Implications

17. Any implications arising from the issues raised in this information report will be addressed within any associated decision making reports required in the future.

## Risk Management

18. There are no risks associated with this information report.

## Conclusions

19. This report is for public and Member information only.
20. The 2008/09 absence levels outturned to 10.86 fte days lost per employee, below the sector average and a 50% reduction on the 2006/07 levels.
21. The key component of the approach to absence management was the investment in dedicated HR time to support operational managers in implementing the Councils attendance management policies.
22. The extent of the input required to support operational managers has lessened in 2010 but there are signs that absence levels in 2010/11 have risen further on the 2009/10 outturn of 12 days lost per fte employee. However, the expected impact of the swine flu epidemic in the 2009/10 figures was less than expected.

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**Wards Affected:** *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

**All**

