

# Report



meeting SOCIAL SERVICES STANDING SELECT  
COMMITTEE

agenda item number

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8<sup>th</sup> June 2004

## **REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

### **PROGRESS IN ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT**

#### **1. Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 A progress report has been requested from the Department by the corporate Personnel function, to contribute to a corporate report which will be considered by the above body on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2004.

#### **2. Information and Advice**

##### **2.1 Statistics**

- 2.1.1 Faced with a difficult task of reducing absence by a significant degree by 2005, the Department has increased the profile of this key performance indicator to managers.
- 2.1.2 Statistics have been available as management information on the Department intranet since mid-2002, replacing the previous lengthy paper reports.
- 2.1.3 Key results for the Department overall are as follows:

Year	Percentage Absence	Days lost per fte/year
2001/2	8.43%	19.2
2002/3	8.43%	19.2
2003/4*	7.60%	17.3

\* Note: to and including December 2003.

- 2.1.4 Proportionately, there is little movement in the main recorded reasons for sickness, namely back/musculoskeletal (approximately 24%), and stress/depression (approximately 21%).

- 2.1.5 So far, it appears that the Department will meet its target for 2003/04 which is 7.6% (this figure being a reduction of 10% on the 2002/03 out-turn).

### **3. Key Activities: 2003/04**

#### **3.1 Managers' Workshop – January 2003**

Aided by a number of specialist training inputs, the reasons for the Department's persistent levels of absence and suggestions for improvements to help meet the Audit Commission's target, were discussed. From this workshop and also the objectives determined through Nottinghamshire Improvement Plan, an **Attendance Management Strategy for 2003/04** was developed.

#### **3.2 Flexible Working Arrangements or Work-Life Balance (WLB)**

Pilots were developed in a number of areas within the Department. Most elected to chose initiatives such as compressed hours or other adaptations to the existing flexitime scheme: a few integrated a degree of home working. Over 70% of respondents reported a reduction of stress levels. In addition, staff retention, service quality and personal performance were all positively affected.

#### **3.3 Physiotherapy**

Launch of the corporate (pilot) provision October 2003, and now being promoted within the Department. Based on the evaluations of earlier trials in Social Services 1999 – 2002.

#### **3.4 Stress Action Projects**

Launched in the Department in two areas: Gedling District Home Care and Ashfield/Mansfield Fieldwork: now being undertaken by I-WHO (based at University of Nottingham).

#### **3.5 Corporate Stress Policy**

Developed from a cross-Departmental Working Group involving Social Services Health and Safety, and Personnel Officers.

#### **3.6 Departmental Long-Term Sickness Protocol**

Use of the document, introduced in 2002 to sharpen practice in the management of long-term sickness and define managers' responsibilities, was reinforced. Although referrals to Personnel for support in absence management cases remain at a very high level due to the increased activity in attendance management, there has been an overall reduction in long-term sickness cases, especially those over 12 months.

#### **3.7 Attendance Management Training for Managers**

Approximately 6 sessions per year, plus abridged training inputs for New First Line Managers Programme. Training is now adapted to reflect the new Corporate Attendance Management Procedure, Departmental Long-Term Sickness Protocol and newly identified priorities for the management of short-term sickness.

### 3.8 New Format Absence Statistics

Developed with the assistance of I.T. specialists, which facilitate “split data” for short-term vs. long-term sickness.

### 3.9 Promotion and expansion of Influenza Immunisation for Winter 2003-04

Increased publicity and nursing support/clinics has resulted in significantly higher take-up.

## 4. Priorities for 2004/05

4.1 The Departmental target for 2004/05 is demanding, i.e. 15% reduction on the 2003/04 out-turn.

4.2 As well as maintaining the impetus on long-term sickness, priorities will include increased focus on the management of short-term sickness.

4.3 Continuation of **Absence Management Audits**.

4.4 Introduction of **quarterly trigger reports** for Chief Officers/Service Heads.

4.5 Trial in Home Care of **Personnel Officer to support managers in short-term sickness procedures** including formal discussion/interview.

4.6 A trial of **increased Personnel support** in a fieldwork locality, in order to monitor the quality of monitoring, and formal discussions/interviews.

4.7 **Development of standard letters and guidance** (e.g. implementing monitoring periods and cautions) for managers as practical support in using the short-term sickness procedures.

4.8 **Promotion and expansion of influenza immunisation programme** for winter 2004/05, subject to evaluation of 2003/04 programme.

4.9 **Extension of Work-Life Balance trials** in the Department in order to provide more quantitative information.

4.10 In response to training evaluation, **further development of Attendance Management Training for Managers**, reflecting more training time, combining with Managing Stress, and addressing issues such as diversity.

- 4.11 **Development of Action Plans arising from Stress Action Projects:** and development of a stress risk assessment tool for use in the longer-term.
- 4.12 Maintenance of the **Attendance Management Steering Group** with representatives from senior officers and Trade Unions as well as operational managers.

## **5. Impact of Hay Job Evaluation**

- 5.1 This report was compiled at the request of the Overview Select Committee to report on the impact on the Hay job evaluation.
- 5.2 Analysis of statistics from October – December 2003, when we might expect to see some impact, has been inconclusive.
- 5.3 Although the significant improvement in general sickness levels in 2003/4 was not maintained during this quarter (the result was similar to the same quarter the previous year), this could be attributed to a large number of factors other than Hay. Note also that overall a significant number of postholders in Social Services have gained from Hay.

## **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.1 It is recommended that Members note and comment on this report.

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