

Report

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Report to:	Corporate Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	20 May 2009
Report by:	Executive Director (Corporate Resources)

Subject:	Maximising Attendance Review
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ outline the findings from the maximising attendance review

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the outcome of the review be noted.

3. Background

3.1. As part of the Council's maximising attendance arrangements, it was agreed that there would be a review of the current employee support services. The review was to include existing provisions, alternative suppliers and any potential enhancement to current services. Our in house Occupational Health Service currently provides employee counselling, physiotherapy, financial advice and support, access to alternative therapies and support provided by the Employee Support Team. The aim of the review was to ensure access to the best, most cost effective support services for employees to help them maintain their attendance at work.

4. Methodology

- 4.1. Meetings took place with a range of current and prospective providers. The opportunity was also taken to explore how the Council could enhance the services already provided to employees. This was aimed particularly at tackling the 2 main causes of absence which remain psychological and musculoskeletal.
- 4.2. Consideration was given to the current methods of communication regarding the range of available supports and how these could be improved. This included looking at providing further support to managers, in terms of training and communication, to enable them to help their employees.
- 4.3. In analysing available services and looking at communication, it was clear that, although the Council already offered a comprehensive range of supports to employees, there were areas which could be improved or enhanced. This has led to a range of new supports for Council employees.

5. New Employee Supports

5.1. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

A new area of support being piloted for 12 months is Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) through The Centre of Therapy. CBT is a well recognised psychotherapeutic

approach which can shorten the length of some psychological absences. The average waiting time to access this service through the NHS is 12 months. Discussions with our Occupational Health Adviser indicate that there may be employees absent at present who would benefit from CBT. Having access to CBT can be used as an early intervention approach to support employees with psychological issues but also as a preventative measure to avoid absence completely.

5.2. Employee Counselling Service

The counselling provision is used widely by employees in need of psychological support, through either management or self-referral, via the Employee Support Team. Three new areas of support are being piloted, again for 12 months, through the Employee Counselling Service (ECS).

5.2.1. Self Referral

To maximise accessibility to counselling a third option is now available to employees, which is self-referral directly to the ECS. Direct access could potentially prevent their psychological problem from getting worse and help maintain their attendance at work.

5.2.2. 24/7 Confidential Helpline

ECS will provide this helpline supported by trained counsellors. The benefits of such a helpline are that employees can seek confidential advice, arrange counselling or be directed towards essential supports at any time of day or night.

5.2.3. On-site Counselling

Employees can access their counselling appointments either by telephone or face to face meetings in Glasgow. However, there are employees who cannot make the journey to Glasgow, but would benefit from face to face counselling. The ECS will pilot on-site counselling at Hamilton to help those employees.

5.3. On-site Financial Advice

Considering the current climate, stronger supports around financial matters may help some employees. As financial concerns can underpin a psychological absence, support in this area was agreed with Blythswood Associates who have a long standing relationship with the Council. They will be running free drop-in services for employees at various Council locations. This will be piloted for a 6 month period to assess the demand.

5.4. Addition to Employee Benefits

As part of the review, other supports were examined. Benenden Healthcare was identified as an organisation which could be promoted to employees as an additional employee benefit. Benenden is a not-for-profit mutual organisation which specialises in healthcare. Information regarding Benenden will be communicated to employees, thus allowing them to choose if they wish to become a member or not.

5.5. Intervention Training for Managers

It is important that managers have an understanding of all supports offered to employees, but also have the confidence to be able to talk to their employees if they recognise a potential issue. Equipping managers with the tools to support and discuss psychological issues with employees can be gained through training and communication. Training to assist managers is already being piloted and delivered through our partners at NHS Lanarkshire.

5.6. Employee Assistance Programme

The Council will now use a single mechanism for communicating available employee supports through the Council's Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). The EAP will bring together information on available supports under one name and, therefore, will provide a more effective means of communicating these supports to employees and managers, for example, through the intranet and open days. This will raise the profile of the existing service and promote the new services noted above.

6. Employee Implications

- 6.1. Providing employees with greater access to supports will improve attendance across all Resources and provide an attractive benefit to those considering applying for a job within the Council.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1. Costs associated with increased service provision will be met within individual Resource budgets through a reduction in the cost of absence.

8. Other Implications

- 8.1. None.

9. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 9.1. This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to an existing policy, function or strategy and, therefore, no impact assessment is required.
- 9.2. Discussions continue on a regular basis with Resource Personnel Managers and the Trades Union through the Maximising Attendance Working Group.

Robert McIlwain
Executive Director (Corporate Resources)

5 May 2009

Link(s) to Council Objectives

- ◆ Excellent employer
- ◆ People focused

Previous References

None

List of Background Papers

Maximising Attendance Policy

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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