WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE - 7 JULY 2009

Title:

ABSENCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

[Portfolio Holder: Cllr Richard Gates]
[Wards Affected: N/A]

Summary and purpose:

To consider a proposal to purchase a sickness absence management system.

How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:

Equality and Diversity Implications:

It is essential that Waverley manage staff fairly and consistently when dealing with absence issues.

Resource/Value for Money implications:

This is a 'spend to save' initiative.

Legal Implications:

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Introduction

1.   Waverley has been reviewing its absence management systems in order to reduce our loss of working time through absence. Sickness absence in the last year cost the authority approximately £250,000. Officers recognise the need to bring a clear focus on employee absence and to reduce the number of days lost per employee per year.

2. Nurse led absence reporting systems
There are a number of companies offering nurse led absence reporting and management systems. Many local authorities use these to reduce and robustly manage the occurrence of sickness absence.

The benefits to staff of these reporting systems are;
- Early intervention and advice from a medical practitioner
- The ability to report absence at the point of illness, e.g. the middle of the night.

The benefits to employers are well documented. In partnership with an absence system provider South Bedfordshire District Council has reduced their incidence of

absence by over 30%. Newham and Rochdale Councils have reduced absence by approximately 40%

3.   The nurse led approach is based on:

•   Managing sickness absence when it happens – employees report their absence by telephone to a nurse, who questions them for the reason for their absence and also offers advice and ask the employee to ring back say after taking an aspirin to see if they can come to work in the afternoon, instead of taking a day off for a headache, web enabled systems provides real time absence assessments and data for the manager and HR data They support line managers with appropriate automated triggers which ensure consistency of line management practice .

•   Monitoring, measuring and understanding information about absence – management information is systematically coded to enable appropriate line manager interventions.

•   Promoting a culture that encourages attendance.

Financial information

4.   The cost of an absence management system as described above is expected to be around £28,000 in a full year. Whilst much of the saving generated from the use of such a system will not immediately achieve cash savings, it will allow for more efficiency and a reduced need for agency/temporary staff. .

Conclusion

5.   The evidence of other authorities suggests a Nurse led absence reporting system would assist Waverley in reducing its absence levels, whilst also providing benefits for staff.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Executive agrees

1.   a supplementary estimate of £16,500 for the year 2009/10 with a view, in future years, to officers working to absorb the costs when the budget is being reviewed, commencing in Autumn 2009; and

2.   that the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Finance Portfolio Holder, be authorised to evaluate and appoint a service provider.

Background Papers (DCEx)

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

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