



Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wellbeing Project

Summary

The Hampshire and Isle of Wight (HIOW) Wellbeing project provides a comprehensive approach to managing wellbeing at work. Wellbeing is about ensuring that local government employees have the physical and mental capacity and resilience to deliver the challenging local government agenda.

It is important to recognise that it is possible to make a serious impact in the costs / productivity losses suffered by authorities by addressing sickness absence and wellbeing more effectively.

The aim of the project was to identify the best way to increase employee wellbeing and thus reducing absence levels in the workplace. The project identifies that both employers and employees have a joint responsibility in ensuring employees live more healthily, both at work and in their private lives.

To date over 500 officers have attended workshops to improve wellbeing.

'High levels of Employee Wellbeing will have a direct impact on the performance of the organisation – whether that is reduced sickness absence rates or the employees going the extra mile to ensure that their performance is at its best. Employees do and will vote with their feet and go off sick in teams/ organisations where they feel undervalued.' Manjit Sandhu, Head of HR New Forest DC



Project Background

Across the HIOW subregion, there is an estimated cost of £41million associated with sickness absence. This equates to approximately 3.5% of the wage bill for almost 70,000 employees.

The Wellbeing project was approved in 2007 to improve the wellbeing of staff by reducing sickness absence and improving sustained attendance at work. The benchmarking data collected at the start of this project showed there was room for improvement in staff wellbeing and subsequently both cashable and non cashable efficiencies could be achieved.

The funding was approved initially for the first two themes of the Wellbeing project to run in parallel in order to maximise the impact of the project. The two themes are policy development and education. Policy development included the collation of benchmarking data and the production of a Policy toolkit. The education theme raised employee awareness via a number of taster sessions on general wellness (nutrition, sleep, physical activity) the second on Positive mind management (stress, mental wellbeing).

Objectives

The overall objective of the project was to provide training and resources to improve workforce wellbeing and reduce sickness absence across HIOW. Collaborative working on policy and training with shared procurement for specialist resource was seen as the best way to achieve this objective. The project covered four themes, Policy development, Education, Occupational Health and Management Development.

Methodology of the Project

Benchmarking data and Policy Development

The first phase of the Wellbeing project required the collation of benchmarking data from all HIOW authorities. A variety of information was collected including BVPI figures, salary costs, potential costs of sickness absence per person etc.

The information gathered showed 10 out of the 15 authorities' sickness absence increased between 2005/06 and 2006/07, one stayed the same and four saw a reduction. Although the figures collated for 2007/08 showed a reduction in the levels of sickness absence there were still seven authorities reporting an increase.

Using the salary information obtained the total cost of sickness absence increased by £2.5 million in 2005/06 and £1.8 million in 2006/07. The qualitative data collected showed a direct correlation between positive employee surveys and a lower short-term absence figure.

The project aimed to deliver a Policy toolkit for Senior Managers to advise on the approach to Employee Wellbeing and sickness absence. This document aims to provide Authorities with the following:

- Wellbeing Policy
- Organisational Design Policy
- Sample Attendance Policy
- Sample Modules relating to Attendance
- Frequently asked questions
- Audit tool for members and senior members

As part of the Wellbeing policy, the heads of HR agreed that 2008/09 should show a reduction of 5% on the BVPI figure for 2007/08 and a further 5% reduction in 2009/10. Achieving a 5% improvement in attendance would equate to £2.05 million saving across the HIOW subregion.

Education

Once the benchmark data was collected on sickness absence – it showed some common reasons for sickness absence these were as follows:

- Mental health/ stress & depression
- Infections/ colds
- Muscular strains

The wellbeing group agreed that Muscular strains – was well covered by their Manual Handling training, but the other two areas required some attention.

An organisation called wellkom was instructed to deliver workshops focusing on general wellbeing and positive mind management. These were delivered in February/ March 2008 and were attend by employees and managers.

Each authority could decide which of the sessions would meet their needs the greatest. For example, in authorities where stress was the main cause of sickness absence, they were able to run more positive mind management sessions. The taster sessions were very well received and in some authorities this lead to further sessions being arranged funded by the individual authority.

'After attending the Wellbeing course I realised that to perform more effectively in my role I needed to take a little more care of myself. Changes to diet and lifestyle that were suggested, seem to have helped increase my energy levels and enable me to focus on tasks I face.'

Jon Sanders, Facilities manager EHDC

Occupational Health (OH)

Occupational Health is a pro-active service which offers help and advice on work-related health matters to employers, managers and individual employees, it also supports management in complying with statutory and mandatory health at work requirements. Occupational Health works in collaboration with the employer, managers, employee representatives and outside agencies (such as Access to Work) in achieving a healthy and safe place of work from policy and procedure development through to implementation and review. Occupational Health offers a range of advice on healthy living and life style issues to the whole workforce.

As part of the Wellbeing project, a consultant was commissioned to recommend improvements to the current provision and identify ways to make it fit for purpose.

The consultants report identified a number of ways the current service could be improved. Also, by looking at the way the resource is purchased other provision options were recommended.

Across the HIOW, there is now a better understanding of the lack of provision of OH amongst local authorities. Further work is being carried out to move this part of the project forward – there is a general understanding that a County wide resource hosted would be good way forward.

Management Development

It is important that Management have the skills, knowledge and capability to manage the wellbeing of their workforce. The group are currently working on some management training – that will be delivered internally by HR/Managers and a Wellbeing conference that will be aimed at Members and Senior Managers.

Benefits Achieved

A target has been agreed to reduce sickness absence by 5% for 2007/8 and a further 5% in 2008/09. This would achieve a valuable cashable saving across the subregion.

The Wellbeing policy toolkit has been collaboratively produced and formally agreed as a sub-regional document providing tools for managers to encourage HIOWLA employees to live more healthily, both at work and in their private lives.

The wellbeing workshops which were very well attended showed benefits to the lifestyles of employees both attendance and feedback was very positive.

- General wellbeing - 235 total attendees
- Positive mind management - 306 total attendees

Some examples of feedback are listed below:

- 'Leaving feeling very positive'
- 'Would definitely like more of this'
- 'I think the timing and place were just right to enable people to understand the benefits of positive mind management'

Critical Success Factors and Lessons Learnt

Member and Senior Management commitment – Before this project was approved by the HIOWLA Improvement Board there were some good discussion at both senior management level and with members about the quantifiable outcomes of the project. This commitment is also essential within organisations if the organisations wellbeing is improved and sickness absence is reduced.

If it can be measured – it can be managed - It was quite clear early on in this project that benchmark data was very important to its success. The wellbeing group gave this a high priority and the level of data quality has improved year by year resulting in better management information.

Engaged and committed wellbeing group – To continually drive any project it needs to be high on organisation agendas. The level of attendance across HIOWLA was very good which helped to drive the benefits achieved.

Project Management skills – We identified early on that to enable the project to keep to time and budget – some project management support was needed, this has been invaluable.

Risks

That Wellbeing is the responsibility of the HR service – the responsibility is a shared one between, Members, Senior Managers, Line Managers, Employees and HR. This shared responsibility ensures that wellbeing continues to be an integral part of the organisations culture and is seen to have a direct high impact on the performance of the organisation.

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