

Devon and Cornwall Police Authority Human Resources Committee

21st November 2007

Open for the purposes of FOI

Report of Director of Human Resources

Attendance Management – Quarterly Update to September 2007

Recommendation(s):

(i) To receive the report and the ongoing actions through the Force Improvement Plan to address the key issues.

Introduction / Summary

1. The report provides the Committee with an update on absence levels within the Force for police officers and staff for the period July to September 2007, detailing any significant trends or issues, as well as outlining those steps that the Human Resources Department has put in place to improve all aspects of managing attendance.
2. The sickness data provided is for the quarter July to September for 2005, 2006 and 2007, together with the two quarters January to March 2006 and April to June 2007 to enable emerging and longer term trends to be identified.
3. The key issues identified within the statistical analysis are as follows:
4. There remains significant commonality in respect of the reasons for absence for both staff groups (police officers and police staff) over the three year period with the majority of absences reported as due to psychological disorders and musculo-skeletal illnesses.
5. In respect of police officers, the reported levels of absence in Cornwall and Isles of Scilly BCU and South and West Devon BCU were above the force average during 4 of the 5 quarters reported with Operations Department above the average in 3 out of the 5 quarters. In South and West Devon BCU, the upward trend appeared to have been checked in April to June 2007, falling to 2.0 average days lost, but July to September 2007 has reverted to an upward trend, increasing to 2.5 days lost. This has been due to increases in both short term and long term absence in the July to September period.
6. In Cornwall and Isles of Scilly BCU, there has been an increasing trend rising from 1.9 average days lost in July to September 2005 to 2.9 average days lost in July to September 2007, although this level has now been maintained for the last two quarters without further increase. The upward trend is largely due to a substantial increase in long term absence rising from 0.9 average days lost in July to September 2005 to 2.1 average days lost in April to June 2007. However, a slight decrease in long term absence has been seen in July to September 2007, reducing to 2.0 average days lost.
7. Operations Department has also experienced a significant upward trend from 1.4 average days lost in July to September 2005 to 2.8 days in April to June 2007, due mainly again to a rise in long term absence from 1.2 days in July to September 2005 to 2.1 average days in April to June 2007. However, in the July to September 2007 quarter, there has been a significant drop in the overall average, falling to 1.9 days, as a result of a decrease in average long term absence from 2.1 days in April to June 2007 to 1.1 days in July to September 2007.
8. The force wide year on year trend in respect of police officers has seen average days lost remain static at 2.1 days in July to September 2006 and July to September 2007. This was

following an increase on the July to September 2005 position of 1.8 days, which was as a result of an increase in average long term absence from 1.0 days to 1.3 days.

9. This trend has also been reflected in the force wide position for the current year regarding police officer absence (from January 2007 to September 2007) starting at 2.4 days in the January to March quarter and levelling out at 2.1 days for the two subsequent quarters. The original reduction in average days lost was primarily due to a decrease in short term absence.
10. In respect of police staff, after a slight increase in average days lost in July to September 2006, July to September 2007 has seen levels drop to a three year low of 2.6 days absence. This corresponds with a reduction in long term absence and increasing police staff numbers.
11. From a national perspective, the attached iQuanta statistics, obtained from the Home Office, show that Devon and Cornwall Constabulary is ranked 7th amongst the 43 Forces for police officer absence lost against available contracted hours (3.2% lost). Police staff absence against available contracted hours for the Force is ranked as 36th when compared to the other 43 Forces with 5.3%.
12. Ongoing activity continues to be co-ordinated by the HR Department through the Force Improvement Plan - Improving Attendance Management to target key causes of absence through a range of specialist and managerial interventions.
13. The force will be commencing a pilot shortly in Cornwall and Isles of Scilly BCU to work more closely with General Practitioners to ensure they are aware of the support mechanisms available to their patients to support their early return to work. A range of longer term initiatives continue to be considered including a well being programme including a stress audit and further support for specialist groups. Such initiatives will be subject to approval, with due consideration to the associated funding requirements.
14. The Attendance Management Policy is being revised with a view to encompassing new initiatives and to provide greater clarity over line manager's responsibilities at relevant trigger points, to ensure managers effectively manage attendance at work. It is intended that the revised Force policy will be implemented by the end of the financial year and progress continues to be made in this respect.
15. With regard to management training an external provider has been identified to deliver training for senior managers, HR Managers and Occupational Health on managing absence in the police service focusing on the use of Efficiency Regulations, subject to approval of the associated funding requirements.

Background Information

1. The Home Office categories for absence will be used for the purposes of analysing duration of absence. The categories are:

Short Term absence -	Up to 7 days
Medium Term absence -	8 to 28 days
Long Term absence -	29 days and over

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Summary of Statistical Analysis

Appendix 1

Police Officers

Overall Trends

The main reasons for police officer absence identified across all quarters are as follows:

Long Term Absence	Medium Term Absence	Short Term Absence
Musculo-skeletal	Musculo-skeletal	Headache/Migraine
Psychological Disorders		Coughs/Colds/Flu
		Digestive Disorders
		Musculo-skeletal

In terms of absence levels across the five quarters, the following BCUs and Departments were found to be above the Force average on a majority of occasions:

Total Duty Days	Long Term Absence	Medium Term Absence	Short Term Absence
Cornwall & Isles of Scilly BCU	South & West Devon BCU	Cornwall & Isles of Scilly BCU	None of the BCUs/Depts exceeded the Force Average in more than 2 quarters.
South & West Devon BCU		Operations	
Operations			

Year on Year Trends

Total average duty days lost to absence in July to September have levelled out at 2.1 days in 2007/08.

Last 3 Quarters' Trends

The total average duty days lost during the last three quarters reflects a positive trend having decreased from 2.4 days to 2.1 days in April to June and remaining at this level in the last quarter. There was a significant drop in the amount of short term absence seen in April to June and whilst the last quarter showed a slight increase, it still represents significantly lower absence levels in comparison to the start of the year.

Police Staff

Overall

The main reasons for absence amongst police staff during the periods are:

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Long Term Absence	Medium Term Absence	Short Term Absence
Psychological Disorders	Musculo-skeletal	Coughs/Colds/Flu
Musculo-skeletal		Digestive Disorders
		Headache/Migraine
		Miscellaneous
		Musculo-skeletal

The following BCUs and Departments were found to be regularly above the Force average for each category on a majority of occasions during the periods:

Total Duty Days	Long Term Absence	Medium Term Absence	Short Term Absence
North & East Devon BCU	North & East Devon BCU	Call Management & Comms	Call Management & Comms
Call Management & Comms	Call Management & Comms		
Operations	Operations		

Year on Year Trends

The Force average duty days lost peaked in July to September 2006 at 2.9 days but this has reduced to a three year low of 2.6 days in 2007/08. There are two primary reasons for this; firstly there was an increase in average long term absence for the quarter in 2006/07 peaking at 1.7 days and secondly, the reduction in long term average absence for the same quarter in 2007/08 (falling to 1.4 days) coupled with an increase in police staff numbers (growth of 174 police staff from 2006/07 to 2007/08).

Last 3 Quarters' Trends

The overall average absence levels for police staff have increased in July to September 2007 from 2.2 days to 2.6 days, having seen a significant fall in the April to June period. This increase has been due to a rise in long term absence during July to September 2007. The other categories have remained static in the last two quarters, again having seen a decrease on the situation in the January to March 2007 period.