



HOW WE HELPED SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL'S LEARNING DISABILITIES SERVICE CUT SICKNESS ABSENCE AND IMPROVE ITS BRADFORD FACTOR SCORE

KEY DETAILS:

Employees Covered: **1160**

Service Type: **Nurse Led**

Absence Reduction: **25%**

Estimates Savings: **£700,000**

“It was clear from our discussions with FirstCare and their work so far that they had proven experience of helping organisations effectively reduce their sickness absence.”

Sharon Whatmore
Somerset County Council's
Absence Officer

Somerset County Council's Learning Disabilities Service (LDS) arranges social care and support for adults with learning disabilities and their carers.

Services arranged by the LDS are provided by the County Council and independent providers and range from residential care, supported living and adult placement schemes, to short residential breaks, domiciliary care and day services.

More than 1,000 staff, who are based at around 60 different sites throughout the county, are currently employed by the LDS.

In 2011, faced with particularly high absence rates, the service decided to outsource its sickness absence reporting.

Averaging at around 16 days full time equivalent (FTE), the service wanted to tackle the issue robustly and quickly. Different options were explored and after much consultation with different specialists and deliberation, we were appointed to manage the LDS' absence monitoring and reporting.

One of the first things we did was to make it easier for staff to notify managers of their absence, regardless of where they are located across the county. As the LDS' staff are based at multiple locations, the most effective solution was to set up a dedicated mobile number for employees to call.

We also set to work on helping the LDS address an on-going widespread issue – managers not recording absences correctly.

“We needed to implement a consistent approach to absence reporting right across the service. However, in order to do this, we recognised we needed to break down the barriers and change the culture around frequent absences first,” said Sharon.

We helped the service significantly reduce absence, improve Return to Work (RTW) compliance and its Bradford Factor Score.

“We’ve also seen a vast improvement in staff morale. It has considerably improved as most employees now see people who are regularly absent from work being managed robustly.”

Sharon Whatmore
Somerset County Council's
Absence Officer

“For instance, some staff felt they were entitled to be absent while others, were questioning why their colleague(s) were off work, which can have a detrimental impact on staff morale.”

We worked closely with the LDS’ occupational health and HR teams to get everybody on board as part of its Learning Cycle. Spanning management engagement, HR, policies and our services, the cycle is aimed at addressing the barriers to proactively tackling sickness absence across the service.

This involved putting new processes in place and training managers on the importance of accurate absence monitoring and reporting. We also made sure managers knew how to use our absence management platform to report absences accurately and consistently and access up-to-the-minute absence data and trends.

The days lost to absence have been slashed from 16 to 12 days FTE.

The service’s RTW compliance has steadily improved since working with us.

In May 2014, its RTW compliance was just over 63%. Just 12 months later, the service’s compliance had increased to almost 90%.

Monthly staff sickness hours have also considerably dropped, from 9,089 in April 2014, to 7,888 in May 2015. And the same can be said for overall absence trends, which have dropped from 2,595 to 2,152.

But that’s not all. As a result of working with us, the service’s **Bradford Factor Score has decreased from just over 277,000 (in December 2014) to 140,770 (in July 2015)**. And it has so far reported an overall **return of investment of £700,000**.

“FirstCare have been amazing. They’re a key part of our Learning Circle and making sure we do what we need to do to proactively address sickness absence, and maintain the robust policies and procedures we need in place to make it happen,” added Sharon.

“Working with FirstCare has generated a positive widespread change. The vast majority of staff are now engaged and on board with proactively addressing sickness absence.”

FirstCare

Absence Management Solutions

Want to know more about effectively managing sickness absence or how we can help you reduce absence rates, increase productivity and reduce costs?

Call us on 03454 565 730 or email info@firstcare.eu