

EAPs improve attendance

Earlier this year the Confederation of British Industries (CBI) announced that sickness absence levels are falling. But it's not all good news when you consider that employee absence still costs British employers a staggering £12.2 billion a year (CIPD Absence Survey 2005). It comes as no surprise, therefore, that absence management remains near the top of the list of concerns for HR departments.

For some companies, regular staff health checks have helped to safeguard against long and short term absence resulting from illness. But what about non health-related absence? Pressures of everyday life, inside and outside of the office, can also contribute to absenteeism. Divorce, debt, addiction problems or disputes with colleagues are the most prevalent.

Early intervention for any absence is critical to a successful outcome. The longer an employee is absent from the workplace, the lower the probability of a return to work. The majority of the million workers taking time off because of sickness return to work within days. But around 17,000 (1.7%) reach their sixth week of statutory sick pay and at this point, almost one in five remain absent and eventually leave work (HSE, 2005).

Increasingly, organisations are finding that an effective way to tackle the cause of more long-term absences and help get people back to work is the introduction of an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) within an employee benefits package (Canada Life, 2005).

As part of the ICAS EAP, organisations are provided with data on the number of absent employees, the relationship between work functioning and problems presented, and the number of absent employees returning to work following face to face and contracted telephone counselling services.

In a recent initiative with ICAS, a multi-national bank experienced an 89% return to work of absent employees accessing face to face counselling. The average absence period was eight weeks; 33% of the problems related to work, 47% related to personal problems and the remainder was a combination of the two.

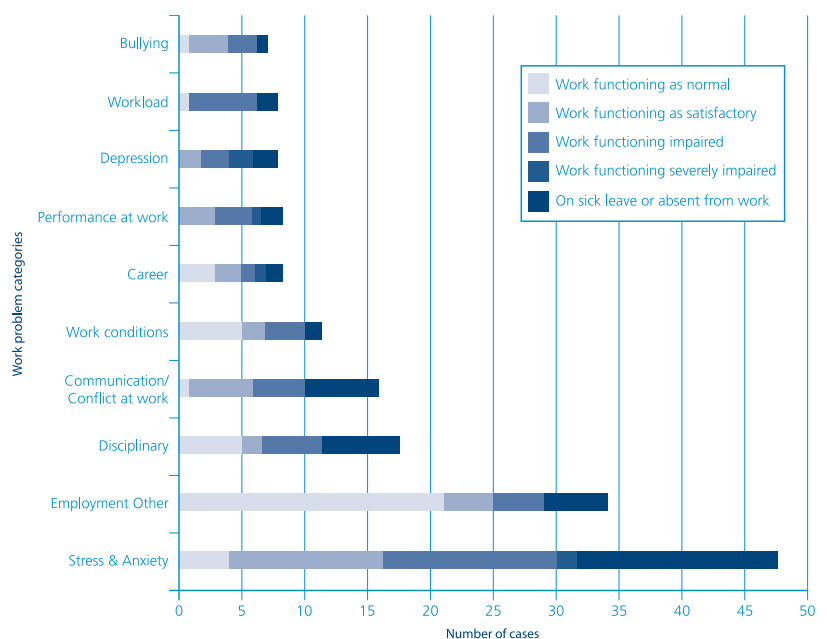
Not only does an EAP work with an HR department to assist with managing levels of absence it can also provide a significant return on investment.

The ICAS return on investment model shows that for an organisation employing 500 people with an average remuneration of £18,000, there could be a return of more than £11 for every £1 invested in an EAP costing £24 per employee. Just one of the many reasons 98% of clients stay with ICAS year after year.

Organisations with an ICAS EAP also benefit from:

- A tailored package of services to meet the cultural and business needs of their organisation
- **ONLINE** LifeManagement™ services
- **ONLINE** Interactive health management tool and health risk assessment
- Improved productivity and efficiency
- A tangible demonstration of duty of care
- Support for individuals or groups going through change such as redundancy or corporate reorganisation
- Unparalleled relationship management support providing information to help you assess and manage risks within the workforce before they escalate. Information such as regular utilisation reports, analysis and organisational data benchmarked by industry sector
- Proven return on investment

Top ten work issues for an EAP client showing how work-related problems impact the workplace



Self help for a quicker return

In some cases of long term absence, employees don't want to be away from work and they try to resolve their problem on their own. A call to their EAP could set them on the road to a quicker return than they may otherwise have achieved.

The Situation

A middle manager who had always been the life and soul of the party and a real sportsman contracted terrible flu one winter. Although he tried to keep going, he eventually succumbed and took to his bed for almost two weeks. The virus really had taken hold and after the fortnight of rest at home, although he seemed physically better, he had no energy. His GP suggested he had a post viral disorder and that counselling might help, but there was a six month waiting list with the NHS.

The manager was willing to try anything to get better and back to work. Then he remembered the ICAS EAP. He was able to make an appointment within a week.

The Solution

The counsellor explained how to manage his behaviour to make the most of his energy to develop his resilience and personal resources. He also spent time helping the manager to develop his confidence which had taken a severe knock when he felt he could no longer rely on his health and fitness.

- The manager was supported back to work in a graduated programme - the detail of which was negotiated by ICAS and his work
- Although still not completely recovered the manager now feels productive again and his self-esteem is growing once more
- The company have their middle manager back sooner than they expected based on the GP's diagnosis

Manager referral calms situation

When an issue is getting too personal, complicated or outside a manager's experience, being able to turn to an external professional for support and guidance can help defuse an otherwise explosive situation.

The Situation

An employee appeared to be struggling with his workload. He had missed deadlines and was taking unplanned absence, often on a Monday. He was increasingly late for work, and his physical appearance had begun to deteriorate.

His manager was worried about him but any attempt to talk with him resulted in the employee flaring up and reacting angrily. The manager rang the ICAS Managerial Consultancy service for advice on how to proceed with her employee, given his emotional volatility.

The manager tested some strategies for broaching the subject of the employee's behaviour with him, and used the Formal Referral process to gain access for the employee to the EAP.

The Solution

The employee was:

- encouraged by ICAS to disclose and discuss with his manager the issues impacting upon his work performance (which were a combination of marital breakdown and alcohol abuse)
- able to address his emotional distress and reduce his reliance on alcohol

The manager supported her employee to meet his performance targets and the employee progressed to resolving his personal and work-related issues. He hasn't missed a Monday since.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

– *the missing link*

Visiting the CIPD Annual Conference and Exhibition this year?
Don't miss our fringe event
'Vocational Rehabilitation – the missing link'

Date: Thursday 27 October 2005

Time: 6.30pm

Venue: Moat House Hotel, Harrogate

Find out how Vocational Rehabilitation unravels the mystery of the medical certificate and gets your people back to work. One multi-national bank experienced an 89% increase in return to work whilst working with ICAS.

During the day, ICAS will be on stand C62 where you can find out about ICAS Vocational Rehabilitation, EAP services and wellbeingworks™ - an online interactive health management tool.

If you require any further information on these services, please contact us on 01908 285200

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