

Leicestershire Police Authority

Internal Audit Report

HR - Absence Management Follow-up (10.08/09)

26 March 2009

FINAL



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ASSIGNMENT CONTROL:

Debrief meeting:	08 October 2008	Auditors:	Chris Harris – Partner Jerry Barton – Client Manager
Draft report issued:	27 October 2008		Linda Coppa – Senior Auditor
Responses received:	26 March 2009		
Final report issued:	26 March 2009	Client sponsor:	Chris Smith – Treasurer (Police Authority)
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1 Executive Summary

1.1 Introduction

At the request of the Audit Committee, an additional piece of work to the Annual Internal Audit Plan was carried out to follow up on the HR Absence Management review completed in November 2007 to confirm progress towards completion of the recommendations agreed as a result of the previous review.

The previous recommendations considered in this review comprised of 3 'significant' recommendations and 5 'merits attention' recommendations.

We discussed progress with the Head of HR Operations and other staff with associated responsibilities in connection with the recommendations agreed to determine the status of agreed actions and sought evidence to confirm progress made to date.

A new Head of HR Operations has been in post since 6 August 2008 and has taken over monitoring of the departmental HR Action Plan and responsibility for implementation of the previous internal audit recommendations left in the previous review completed in November 2007. As part of these responsibilities he held an away day involving key staff to discuss both Action Plans as well as discussing issues relating to sickness and how best they can move forward in the future to effectively manage absence across the force. The outcomes of the day are to be incorporated into a new Action Plan over the next 6-8 weeks (including the recommendations left in the previous report which are yet to be implemented). Some of these issues are covered in the findings set out in the main report.

1.2 Overall Conclusion

Taking account of the issues identified in the remainder of the report and in line with our definitions (as set out at Appendix A), in our opinion good progress has been made towards implementation of the previous recommendations and where previous recommendations have not reached the due implementation date yet they are being progressed towards implementation in line with the agreed dates.

1.3 Limitations to the Scope of the Audit

The review only covered audit recommendations previously made and did not review the whole control framework of the area, therefore we are not providing assurance on the entire risk and control framework.

We have followed up all previous recommendations as agreed in the Action Plan which included discussions and provision of associated evidence to confirm progress and implementation to date for those recommendations agreed.

Our work does not provide any guarantee or absolute assurance against material errors, loss or fraud.

1.4 Status of Recommendations Followed Up

We confirmed through the review that:

- three recommendations have been implemented
- one recommendation is being implemented on an ongoing basis
- one recommendation has been deemed as not now required
- the remaining three recommendations are being implemented and are expected to be implemented by the deadlines set in the initial review.

2 Action Plan

The priority of the findings and recommendations are as follows:

Fundamental - action is imperative to ensure that the objectives for the area under review are met.

Significant - requires action to avoid exposure to significant risks in achieving the objectives for the area under review.

Merits Attention - action advised to enhance control or improve operational efficiency.

Ref	Recommendation	Categorisation	Accepted Y/N	Management comment	Implementation date	Manager responsible
Overall	Continue to monitor implementation of outstanding recommendations through to the agreed implementation dates.	Merits Attention	yes	The action plan has been updated and prioritised to include the recommendations. This plan is updated on a monthly basis and progress is monitored through the sickness absence working group.	January 2009	Phil Mason

3 Findings and Recommendations

Each recommendation followed up has been categorised in line with the following:

Status	Detail
1	The whole recommendation has been fully implemented.
2	Progress has been made on implementation of the recommendation. This is ongoing.
3	The recommendation has not been implemented.
4	Superseded: the recommendation is no longer applicable.
5	The agreed date for implementation of the recommendation has not yet been reached.

3.1

Ref	Original Recommendation	Original Category	Original Management Response	Impl'n Date	Manager Responsible	Status	Comments/Implications	New Recommendation
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Ref	Original Recommendation	Original Category	Original Management Response	Impl'n Date	Manager Responsible	Status	Comments/Implications	New Recommendation
1. (Prev Rpt) 4 & 10	Seek to implement the Force Sickness Action Plan as set out in line with the target dates NB: (The Action Plan drawn up by management covers a number of the elements covered in this review and rather than making individual recommendations in some areas covered we have agreed with the Head of HR Operations and Occupational Health to cover most of the issues within this overall recommendation, as weaknesses have already been identified and individual targets have been set out for completion).	Significant	Work is underway to implement the Force Sickness plan - however this is a three year plan.	Sept. 08	Supt. Leavesley	2	<p>Since the previous audit review the Action Plan has been progressed on an ongoing basis towards completion. The latest update on the Plan was reported to the HR Committee at their meeting of 20 August 2008. Within the section headed comments/ progress the latest progress is being recorded.</p> <p>We confirmed that associated issues are also subject to discussion across the Force including the Performance Development Group, Sickness Absence Working Group and Force Sickness Performance meetings. It was also noted that as new actions are identified these are being added to the Action Plan to be monitored through to completion, thus it continues to be a moving document.</p> <p>The post of Head of Human Resources Operations has been subject to a new appointment and the new post holder has been in post since 6 August 2008. Since taking up this post he confirmed that he has been updated on the Action Plan and held an away day on 6 October with key staff and officers to clarify what needs to be achieved going forward.</p>	Overall recommendation Continue to monitor the implementation of remaining previous recommendations to ensure they are implemented in accordance with the agreed timescales.

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Cont.							<p>They re-visited the Action Plan in relation to how they plan to progress plans for future development, discussed the priorities, ways of working and project management for the future. He confirmed that over the next 6 to 8 weeks a new Action Plan will be drawn up setting out how they intend to move plans forward.</p> <p>In order to provide a smooth transition from the existing Action Plan to the new Plan it is expected that an update on current progress will be provided along with confirmation of actions completed, those being transferred, and identification of any actions to be closed.</p> <p>It is expected that the focus for the future will be geared more towards communication and engagement with staff and officers, the agenda for senior officers / managers and workforce, the organisational culture, values and aims for managing sickness across the organisation.</p>	

Ref	Original Recommendation	Original Category	Original Management Response	Impl'n Date	Manager Responsible	Status	Comments/Implications	New Recommendation
2 (7)	Ensure both system and file records are accurately maintained and certification required is provided to support periods of absence in accordance with the Procedures in place.	Significant	A semi-automated reporting procedure has been implemented and will ensure an improvement in records accuracy	June 08	Supt. Leavesley	1	<p>We were advised by the Senior HR Officer Business Solutions that the HR Admin Clerk has recently been made responsible for ensuring the sickness records are kept up to date and that details are entered onto the systems promptly. He also advised that they now meet regularly and he confirms that the associated records are being updated as required. As this system has only just been implemented no testing was carried out on the accuracy of records as this system is yet to be properly embedded.</p> <p>As part of this control process staff also have the facility to check their own sickness record via access to HR Self Service, thus providing an opportunity for them to raise any queries over the accuracy of their sickness records.</p>	

Ref	Original Recommendation	Original Category	Original Management Response	Impl'n Date	Manager Responsible	Status	Comments/Implications	New Recommendation
3 (11)	Ensure 'trigger reports' are run and issued to Line Managers in line with the Managing health procedures to support the requirements set out. HR should seek assurance that in all cases appropriate action is undertaken to monitor absences as required.	Significant	Refer to previous comment	Sept. 08	Supt. Leavesley	1	<p>Through discussion with the Head of HR Operations he confirmed that he receives monthly 'trigger ' reports for this own department and in addition we confirmed that these are produced for all departments just after each month end and passed to Line Managers. The reports are to be reviewed and checked to ensure that action is being taken to ensure they progress any required on plans and update associated records accordingly.</p> <p>Line Managers are responsible for setting up any required Action Plans for employees on the lists to monitor the level of sickness more closely once the trigger points are reached. Where actions plans are not actioned details are to be recorded on the NSPIS system</p> <p>Through discussion with the Head of HR (Operations) he confirmed that as part of future plans he aims to revisit the current 'trigger points' with a view to assessing whether there is a need to change them in line with future plans. In addition, he advised that more detailed work on the level of Action Plans established is to be monitored more closely to ensure compliance with the sickness policy /procedures as well as managing sickness more effectively in the future.</p>	

Ref	Original Recommendation	Original Category	Original Management Response	Impl'n Date	Manager Responsible	Status	Comments/Implications	New Recommendation
4 (2)	Remind Managers of the need to take appropriate action to ensure the sickness records are updated promptly with the aim to ensure the correct statistical data is reported in a timely manner as required by the Home Office	Merits Attention	This will be achieved through a number of interventions including Leadership training, HR officers advice and messages to the forces management team			1	<p>We were advised that various mechanisms have been used to remind all managers, staff and officers of the need to ensure they report sickness promptly and ensure records are updated in a timely manner. These include closer monitoring of the prompt recording of data which is monitored through data reported to the Performance Delivery Group, Force Sickness monitoring meetings, the Sickness Action Working Group, as well as the Communication Plan issued in conjunction with the implementation of the new Single Reporting Line, management meetings and communications by the HR Officers.</p> <p>Through discussion with the Performance Review Officer she confirmed they have noted improvements in the time being taken to submit the data and they are presently closely monitoring the data quality from week to week towards gaining the assurance that the integrity of the data records is considered reliable to ensure the correct data is being reported. We were advised that the data for the period to June 2008 was submitted two weeks after the deadline, (though partly due to some delay due to annual leave commitments). However, we were advised that with the continued monitoring regime in place they do expect to meet the deadline date for the submission for the period to September 2008 which is due by the end of October 2008.</p> <p>The Head of HR Operations advised us that they have not progressed with the DMS system and that the matter is for</p>	

Ref	Original Recommendation	Original Category	Original Management Response	Impl'n Date	Manager Responsible	Status	Comments/Implications	New Recommendation
Cont	Determine whether there is a potential to procure a suitable Data Management System to aid the monitoring and production of absence data and to contribute towards providing more detailed quality data.	Merits Attention	The force is procuring a new DMS system – this may aid in achieving this objective, when used in conjunction with the benefits of timely sickness data being added to NSPIS HR	Mar.09	Supt. Leavesley	5	<p>However, we were advised that with the continued monitoring regime in place they do expect to meet the deadline date for the submission for the period 2008.</p> <p>The Head of HR Operations advised us that they have not progressed with the DMS system and that the matter is 'on hold' at the present time. The costs associated with the purchase have increased significantly over the period since the review and are a contributing factor to the decision to defer this at the present time.</p>	Covered in Para. 1

Ref	Original Recommendation	Original Category	Original Management Response	Impl'n Date	Manager Responsible	Status	Comments/Implications	New Recommendation
5 (5)	As part of the new Single Line Reporting process, introduce an additional control to produce an end of day report to managers to provide confirmation of all calls received each day, to provide a means for managers to check they have received all notifications	Merits Attention		Sept. 08	Supt. Leavesley	4	<p>The Senior HR Officer Business Solutions advised that a decision has been made that this control is not required as they have not been notified of any particular issues / concerns from Line Managers over the issue of missing reports. He recalled only one recent instance where a manager had raised a query over a missing report which was found to be a minor technology issue which has since been dealt with.</p> <p>He confirmed that were there to be difficulties these would be notified to him and any volume of such calls would prompt a review of the system.</p> <p>Through discussion with the Head of HR Operations, he agreed this control is surplus to requirements as the new system is working well, though accepted that in event problems increased in the future such a control would be re-considered.</p>	Covered in Para.1

Ref	Original Recommendation	Original Category	Original Management Response	Impl'n Date	Manager Responsible	Status	Comments/Implications	New Recommendation
6 (6)	Revise procedures to ensure the return to work interviews are completed within a set timeframe upon return to work and the system is updated promptly to ensure it is kept up to date.	Merits Attention	HR policies and procedures will be prioritised and revised throughout the next 24 months – this will be one of the first tackled.	Dec. 08	Supt. Leavesley	5	<p>We were advised that the Senior HR Officer Business Solutions and the Senior HR Officer Policy & Contracts are working together to review and update the Procedures and associated forms in line with the deadline which was set for completion by December 2008.</p> <p>Through discussion with The Senior HR Officer Business Solutions he also advised that they do produce regular statistics to confirm the compliance levels for completing return to work interviews and provided some data to support this control. He advised that as the data being produced at present covers a one year period (and includes data collected prior to the introduction of the new Single Line Reporting system and in order to gauge more recent activity he has requested an additional report limited to the last 3 months data to identify the current level of compliance. In the event they identify any particular areas for concern on compliance will be reported.</p>	Covered in Para.1

Ref	Original Recommendation	Original Category	Original Management Response	Impl'n Date	Manager Responsible	Status	Comments/Implications	New Recommendation
7. (14)	In the interim period until the action plan can be fully implemented, ensure any cases relating to Unsatisfactory Performance / attendance are dealt with in accordance with Home Office guidance, and draw up associated Force Policies and procedures taking account of the guidance issued by the Home Office and local requirements in line with the target date set within the Action Plan.	Merits Attention	There will be national roll-out of new Conduct and Performance Regs. - this will be tied into that training	Mar. 09	Supt. Leavesley	5	<p>We confirmed that the progress is being tracked as part of the Force Action Plan and details of progress are set out in the latest update on the Plan reported through the HR Committee at their meeting of 20 August 2008.</p> <p>Through discussion with the Senior HR Officer Projects and Contracts and it was confirmed that the new Regulations are due to come into force on 1 December 2008. The Home Office have produced guidance on this subject and training is presently being provided regionally to Line Managers, HR Officers, Professional Standards and Panel Members to deal with issues of poor performance, ill health and absence in a fair and equitable manner. We were advised that a meeting with Professional Standards on 8 October 2008 on the training provided so far and it was agreed that further training and clarification on roles and responsibilities should be provided to assist staff required to deal with these cases in the future.</p>	Covered in Para. 1

Ref	Original Recommendation	Original Category	Original Management Response	Impl'n Date	Manager Responsible	Status	Comments/Implications	New Recommendation
Cont							We confirmed that the new Force Unsatisfactory Performance Procedures are currently being progressed based on the Home Office regulations which take effect as from 1 December 2008. We confirmed the procedures are being progressed towards meeting the target implementation agreed in the previous review by March 2009, and in the interim period the Home guidance will be followed.	

4. Acknowledgement

A number of staff gave their time during this review and we would like to record our thanks for the assistance given.

Appendix A: Definitions for Progress Made

The following opinions are given on the progress made in implementing recommendations.

This opinion relates solely to the implementation of those recommendations followed up and not does not reflect an opinion on the entire control environment.

Progress in implementing recommendations	Overall number of recommendations implemented	Consideration of fundamental recommendations	Consideration of significant recommendations	Consideration of merits attention recommendations
Good	80% +	None outstanding	Those significant recommendations outstanding are in the process of being implemented	Those merits attention recommendations outstanding are in the process of being implemented
Reasonable	50 – 80%	Those fundamental recommendations outstanding are in the process of being implemented	Those significant recommendations outstanding are in the process of being implemented	Most of the merits attention recommendations are in the process of being implemented
Little	< 50%	Unsatisfactory progress has been made	Unsatisfactory progress has been made	Unsatisfactory progress has been made