A Novel Approach to Early Sickness Absence Management: The Easy (Early Access to Support for you) Way

9th March 2016

Ewan Macdonald & Judith Brown
• Average - 3.7% time lost = 8.4 days per annum
• Public sector - 4.5% = 10.3 days
• Manufacturing - 2.9% = 6.7 days
• Health Sector - 5.5% = 12.6 days
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hospital</th>
<th>Total Lost</th>
<th>Total Hours</th>
<th>Sickness Absence Rate, %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NHS Ayrshire &amp; Arran</td>
<td>76,637.16</td>
<td>1,405,606.51</td>
<td>5.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHS Borders</td>
<td>20,800.19</td>
<td>446,875.96</td>
<td>4.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The State Hospital</td>
<td>5,651.79</td>
<td>114,768.23</td>
<td>4.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golden Jubilee</td>
<td>5,775.24</td>
<td>131,066.30</td>
<td>4.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHS Fife</td>
<td>63,525.64</td>
<td>1,182,372.79</td>
<td>5.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHS Greater Glasgow &amp; Clyde</td>
<td>279,240.28</td>
<td>5,707,720.01</td>
<td>4.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHS Highland</td>
<td>59,184.23</td>
<td>1,151,295.63</td>
<td>5.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NHS Lanarkshire</strong></td>
<td><strong>89,104.96</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,592,907.73</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.59</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHS Grampian</td>
<td>95,739.09</td>
<td>1,897,097.04</td>
<td>5.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHS Lothian</td>
<td>139,509.22</td>
<td>3,005,387.47</td>
<td>4.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHS Forth Valley</td>
<td>48,778.89</td>
<td>925,031.70</td>
<td>5.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHS Dumfries &amp; Galloway</td>
<td>29,613.88</td>
<td>590,259.54</td>
<td>5.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• “What else can we do about it?”

• “This is the target I am least likely to meet”
Duration of Absence
Duration of Absence

Age
Spells of Absence
Absence indicators

- Absence indicators
  - Absence vs Job Level

Graph showing the relationship between absence and job level.
Absence indicators

Absence vs. Job Satisfaction

Absence

Job Satisfaction
The Science of Sickness

Absence

ABSENCE

0 1 2 3 4

0

1

2

3

4
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Ratio of severity rate women : men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Simpson, 1962</td>
<td>1.5 : 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurses</td>
<td>Ministry of Pensions, 1965</td>
<td>2.1–1.1 : 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Ministry of Pensions, 1965</td>
<td>1.5-1.6 : 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerks</td>
<td>Ministry of Pensions, 1965</td>
<td>1.4-1.6 : 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus conductors</td>
<td>Ager and Raffle, 1973</td>
<td>2.0-1.5 : 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical &amp; technical</td>
<td>Ager and Raffle, 1973</td>
<td>1.9-1.8 : 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airline Cabin Crew</td>
<td>Preston, 1977</td>
<td>1.7 : 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postal clerical</td>
<td>Post Office, 1975-77</td>
<td>1.6 : 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone clerical</td>
<td>Post Office, 1975-77</td>
<td>1.3 : 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postmen/women</td>
<td>Post Office, 1975-77</td>
<td>1.2 : 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Life events
• Social factors
• Personality
• Age and Sex
• Morale
• Size of organisation
• Health
Predicting Job Loss in those off sick
Red Flag questions

• Do you think you will be able to return to work after your current sick leave?

• Do you believe that from your health standpoint you will be able to do your current job in six months time?

Evidence Based Interventions that reduce sickness absence

- Maintaining contact with workplace
- Early intervention by OP/OHA
- Postal intervention- advice
- Case Management- OHSXtra
- Musculoskeletal intervention
- Mental Health intervention
- OT Assessment
- Work modification
- Phased return to work
- Health Promotion activities
Early Access to Support for You
Early Access to Support for You
Tenth Day of Absence

- Occupational Health
- Case Management
- Line Manager
- Human Resources
- Case Conferences
- Support (Physio, H&S, etc)
Research Questions

• Is the EASY service effective in reducing sickness absence in NHS Lanarkshire?

• Does the EASY service offer net economic benefits?

Funding provided by the Scottish Collaboration for Public Health Research Policy/CSO (SCPH/15)
• **Information Services Division (ISD) sickness absence data**
  Monthly sickness absence rates from NHS Lanarkshire (NHSL) and all other health Boards in Scotland

• **EASY database**
  Records each sickness absence event reported to EASY service
  Approximately 33,000 events May 2008 to May 2012
  Consent, sex, age, job family, cause of absence, first day of absence, date of first phone call, date return to work

• **EASY satisfaction questionnaire**
  Questionnaire to 1000 NHSL staff with a closed sickness absence event in 2012
  Questionnaire to 275 NHSL managers
Sickness absence rates: NHSL & NHS Scotland excluding NHSL
Pre and Post- EASY intervention in NHSL

Time series analysis – ISD data

Sickness Absence rates (%)

Pre-EASY service  
Roll-out of EASY service  
EASY service fully operational

Heat target announced to all Health Boards
EASY service introduced in NHSL
4% sickness absence HEAT target to be achieved

2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012

NHSL  
NHS Scotland excl NHS Lanarkshire
• The EASY intervention reduced the sickness absence rate in NHSL by approximately 21% (P<0.001)

• Sickness reduced by 9.4% (P<0.001) in all the other Health Boards (excluding NHS Lanarkshire)
Six causes account for 76% absences and 70% days absence.
GI and CCF account for 45% absences and 19% days absence.
MH and Musculoskeletal account for 19% absences and 42% days absence.
Kaplan Meier RTW curve for all sickness absence events by cause of absence

Number of days for 50% of absentees to return to work:
- Gastrointestinal: 4 days
- Cough, cold, flu: 5 days
- ENT: 6 days
- All other: 6 days
- Respiratory: 7 days
- Musculoskeletal: 10 days
- Mental Health: 28 days
• Novelty of EASY service: Intervention from Day 1 of absence
• Compliance defined as the percentage of sickness events reported to EASY on the first day of absence - ~80%
• Compliance varies by job family and cause of absence
Kaplan Meier RTW curve for all sickness absence events by reporting compliance.
Kaplan Meier RTW curve for those absentees phoned on FDA, 1 day and 2 days after FDA (omitting day 1 and 2 returners)

Those phoned 1 day after FDA were 13.8% less likely to RTW

Those phoned 2 days after FDA were 28.3% less likely to RTW
• Extrapolating the time series analysis indicated the EASY service had achieved additional savings of 1,825 hours per month.

• Over 4 years these summed to 87,600 hours saved equivalent to 44.71 years. Total savings in salaries of £1,396,680.

• Estimated costs of EASY (staff, associated operating costs, start-up costs) are £1,230,290.

• Estimated net benefit £166,390.

• The EASY service improves economic efficiency: the value of the hours saved from the reduced sickness absence comfortably exceeds the cost of operating the service.
• Postal questionnaire to 1000 NHSL employees
• 275 Managers surveyed (SurveyMonkey)
• Both employees and managers had very positive views of the EASY service
The EASY service was effective in reducing sickness absence in NHSL.

Those absentees phoned on the first day of absence were more likely to return to work than those phoned on subsequent days.

The EASY service improved economic efficiency: the value of hours saved comfortably exceeded the cost of the intervention.

• Co-investigators on SCPHRP sickness absence grant
  Ewan Macdonald (PI), Judith Brown, Consol Serra, Lia Demou, Kaveh Sanati, Joyce Craig, Mark Kennedy, Keith Murray, Robert Atkinson, Sarah Mitchell, Mairi Gaffney

• Moyra Anderson (Salus), John Frank (SCPHRP), Daniel Mackay (UoG)

• Information Services Division NHS