



Kent Police work with Robertson Cooper to save 18,600 days in absenteeism drive

- ***Line managers key to combating long-term absence***
- ***Stress, poor health and fitness key contributors to absenteeism***
- ***Kent Police are now collectively fitter and healthier than the general population***

Kent Police provides policing for the county of Kent in the South East of England - one of the largest counties in the UK. It employs around 6,200 police officers and staff based at more than 20 locations. The Force's main aim is to build safe and confident communities by offering people-centred service delivery and ensuring value for money. The Force's leaders have also developed a clear vision of becoming an employer that is committed to ensuring its workforce is characterised by high levels of well-being and performance.

It was this commitment that led the force to ask Robertson Cooper to conduct a Quality of Working Life (QWL) audit in 2003 using ASSET (Robertson Cooper's validated risk assessment tool) to identify the barriers and enablers to staff well-being and, in turn, the causes of absenteeism. The following conclusions were drawn from the 2003 survey:

- A need to help the workforce to improve its health and well-being
- That stress, poor health and fitness are key contributors to absenteeism
- Staff perceptions of the organisation's commitment to the workforce was slightly less than that perceived in other police forces
- Line managers were not always able to identify when staff were exhibiting signs of stress and did not always have the skills to help them to cope more effectively
- Resources and Communication were seen as a barrier to well-being to a slightly greater extent than in most other forces
- Specific occupational hotspot groups were identified: For example, the Control Room Call Centre, Crime Investigation, Custody Suite, IT and Special Operations

Drawing on the output from the audit, and in consultation with Force representatives, Robertson Cooper put forward recommendations for improvement. A dedicated working party then formulated an action plan for the Force to prioritise, implement and integrate with other change initiatives. A wide range of initiatives were launched, including:

- Staff entering vulnerable units (e.g. Child Protection) now have psychological screening before they commence their role.
- The Force introduced the W8wise@work campaign, which included staff MOTS, as well as diet and exercise programmes.
- 'Well person' checks were introduced and offered to all staff
- A new Attendance Management programme was rolled out



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Robertson Cooper Case Study

Specific interventions

Line managers key to combating long-term absence

Kent Police established an Attendance Management Programme to train line managers to identify certain trigger points for stress and absenteeism. A standard process was also put in place within the Force which established steps to help identify and address potential issues before they escalate.

Ensuring the health and fitness of the Police Force

A key initiative introduced by the Force was the W8wise@work campaign. As Paul Smith, Head of Health Services at Kent Police, explained “A large proportion of our workforce is with us for their entire working life and therefore it is vital that we have initiatives in place that have a positive effect on their well-being. We also need to ensure that they have the best possible support and working environment.” The Force now regularly runs health initiatives, including offering a ‘Health MOT’, clinics and master classes to advise on diet and fitness, as well as running awareness-raising campaigns on risks to men’s and women’s health.

Two years on - second audit to measure improvements

Kent Police wanted to make an on-going commitment to the well-being of their staff and was keen to measure the impact of their post-audit interventions. Consequently, they asked Robertson Cooper to conduct a second audit, covering all staff, two years after the first.

Improvements across the board

The results were impressive as improvements were seen across the board, including:

- A reduction in reporting of all of the barriers to well-being measured by ASSET – particularly work-life balance and control
- Increased levels of commitment were reported - both the commitment of employees to the organisation and the perceived commitment of the organisation to the workforce
- Improved levels of physical health and psychological well-being were reported
- At an organisational level, a 25% reduction in sickness absence was delivered

After the second Audit, Robertson Cooper’s client Paul Smith commented: “As a result of the well-being initiatives put in place since 2003, the Force has reduced absenteeism by 25%, which is equivalent to three working days per year per head from a 6,200 strong staff - this equates to significant cost savings. The Force has seen increased levels of commitment both to and from the organisation and is now collectively fitter and healthier than the general population in the UK.” Kent Police has plans to continue these well-being initiatives and also share best-practice with other UK Police Forces.

With City of London Police achieving similar results last year, Kent Police is the second police force in the UK to deliver significant improvements in well-being following a second ASSET survey with Robertson Cooper. These results provide proof that well-being really does impact the bottom line – in this case, in terms of the measurable business benefit of improved absence rates.