

ANGUS COUNCIL

RESOURCES & CENTRAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

16 JUNE 2005

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME – ANNUAL REPORT 2004/05

REPORT BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

ABSTRACT

This report advises members of usage of the employee assistance programme provided by Care First during the financial year 2004/05.

1. RECOMMENDATION

The Committee note the terms of this report for its interest.

2. BACKGROUND

In January 2004 the Resources and Central Services Committee agreed to the appointment of Care First to provide an employee assistance programme to council employees for a period of three years.

The service comprises:

- A 24 hour, 7 day per week telephone counselling service
- Up to 5 face to face counselling sessions per employee
- A management support line

The service was launched in April 2004 through a combination of media including Care First leaflets and wallet cards, posters and managers' guide. A total of 27 presentations were made to managers and staff. Six presentations were made to management groups and 21 were open briefings available to any employee to attend. The presentations were very well attended and, as is to be expected, questions centred around services offered, accessibility and confidentiality.

3. SERVICE USAGE 2004/05

During 2004/05 60 employees contacted Care First for support. From these 60 individuals a total of 196 contacts were made to the service.

Of the 196 contacts, 102 were to the telephone counselling helpline and 94 face-to-face sessions were taken up. This means that 48% of all support provided was face-to-face.

43% of the employees were from Social Work & Health and 32% were from Education. No employees contacted the helpline from the Chief Executive's, Law & Administration or Roads Departments. Throughout the year, 36 (60%) female employees and 24 (48%) male employees made use of the service.

The above information is shown in more detail in Appendix 1.

Based on a headcount of 5000 employees, overall usage for the year was 4%.

Of the cases presented to Care First during the year, 60% of issues brought up were personal and 40% were work related. It is the experience of Care First that personal issues generally represent around 70% of the issues raised, whilst work related issues represent approximately 30%.

Of the personal issues employees discussed, detailed in Appendix 2, the most significant were health (30%), relationships (29%) and family concerns (13%). These issues are often linked and may include concerns over problem behaviour in children to rights of access following family breakdown. It is the experience of Care First that these categories are typically the highest.

As shown in Appendix 3 the most frequently presented work related issues throughout the period, were work related health (33%).

The majority of cases were where employees were feeling uncomfortable levels in pressure which was related, for instance, interpersonal relationships, work overload, changes of work. A wide range of issues were generally raised as contributing to these feelings.

Where work related health is identified, Care First actively encourages and tries to open communication paths between the employee and the organisation. Their approach is not to isolate the individual away from the organisation or the problem but to encourage constructive approaches to the most appropriate person within the organisation. Individuals who have expressed feeling stressed at work, with further investigation have often identified events in their personal lives which can no longer be contained at work. Care First provide support and counselling to individuals for this underlying issue, allowing the individual to cope with the day-to-day work pressures more effectively.

The use of the management support line was limited during the year with only two contacts, one relating to a disciplinary/grievance matter and one for general information.

Questionnaires were given by Care First to all employees who received face-to-face counselling with an invitation to provide anonymous feedback on the Care First service by freepost return. Six questionnaires were returned during the year with employees reporting a number of positive benefits from counselling and overall satisfaction with the service.

An example of comments provided is as follows:

'in a short period of time they investigated (and discovered) my possible reason as to why I was like I was and why it may have influence in the problems I had at work. I felt and still do feel that it stopped me going off on ill health with stress'.

Members are asked to note that the information given in this report and the attached appendices is provided by Care First to enable the council to monitor usage of the service. Employee confidentiality is however assured as it is not possible to identify from that information any of the employees who have contacted Care First.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with the terms of this report.

5. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

There are no human rights implications associated with this report.

6. CONSULTATION

The Director of Finance and Director of Law & Administration have been consulted on the terms of this report.

A B Watson
Chief Executive

HR/PerServMan

NOTE No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above Report.

CARE FIRST COUNSELLING INFORMATION

Employees Using Service:	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Total
Female	12	12	7	5	36
Male	3	5	8	8	24
				Total	60

All Contacts:	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Total
Telephone	24	29	31	18	102
Face to Face	12	27	38	17	94
				Total	196

Employing Department:	Total
Chief Executive's	-
Education	19
Environmental & Consumer Protection	2
Finance	2
Information Technology	2
Law & Administration	-
Leisure Services	4
Planning & Transport	2
Property Services	3
Roads	-
Social Work & Health	26
	Total
	60

CARE FIRST COUNSELLING INFORMATION

Personal Issues:	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Total
Alcohol	-	1	1	1	3
Bereavement	-	3	-	-	3
Debt	-	2	-	-	2
Domestic Abuse/Violence	2	-	-	-	2
Drugs	-	-	-	-	-
Family	2	1	1	4	8
Gambling	-	-	-	-	-
General Finance	-	-	-	1	1
Health	5	4	4	6	19
Housing	-	1	1	1	3
Information	4	-	-	-	4
Relationship	2	2	9	5	18
				Total	63

CARE FIRST COUNSELLING INFORMATION

Work Related Issues:	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Total
Absence/Attendance	1	2	-	1	4
Abuse/Violence by Colleagues	1	-	-	-	1
Abuse/Violence by Members of the Public	-	-	-	-	-
Bullying/Harassment By Colleagues	1	-	-	-	1
Bullying/Harassment by Members of the Public	-	-	-	-	-
Changes at Work	1	1	1	1	4
Disciplinary	-	2	-	1	3
Grievance	-	1	-	1	2
Industrial Injury	-	-	-	-	-
Information	-	-	1	1	2
Performance – General	1	1	-	1	3
Performance – Target Related	-	-	-	-	-
Relationships at Work	2	2	1	-	5
Traumatic Incident	-	1	-	-	1
Work Related Health	2	6	1	5	14
				Total	40