

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL
CORPORATE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
10 FEBRUARY 2004

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICE

Report by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1** To report on a pilot physiotherapy service operated during the financial year 2003/04 (4 March to 30 November 2003) and to recommend continued service provision as part of the Council's occupational health provision.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** Absences due to Musculo-Skeletal complaints are the most prevalent absence type in the UK. In the Council absences attributable to back, neck, shoulder, arm and leg problems amount to 16.5% of the overall total absence rate of 5.4% per annum.
- 2.2** A physiotherapy service was provided on a "pilot" basis during the year 2003/04 with a view to considering employees' and managers' response, impact on related absences and anticipated savings.
- 2.3** The pilot programme was run by the Council's occupational health service providers, Associated Health Specialists who had provided a similar pilot in Renfrewshire Council and where a permanent arrangement is now in place.

A copy of the report detailing the full findings of the pilot exercise prepared by AHS is available for elected members on request from the Head of Personnel.

3. KEY FINDINGS

3.1 Key findings from the pilot study include:

- 121 employees were referred for physiotherapy
- Of the 96 cases closed at the date of the report 57 were employees at work and 39 were employees absent from work
- 88% of attendees required 3 or fewer appointments to regain fitness
- 31 employees treated whilst at work would normally be expected to be absent for a period of time at an estimated cost of £43400 (based on wages/salary only)
- 23 employees are considered to have returned to work as a result of the physio intervention savings from those employees who returned to work earlier than expected as a result of the physiotherapy intervention are estimated at £50,000
- Overall savings are estimated at £135,000 per annum (as detailed at paragraph 4 below).

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1** The AHS report indicates that as well as demonstrating a positive approach to employee health, significant savings arise from the introduction of in-house physiotherapy services. These services can prove difficult to gain access via GPs or wider NHS services and employees are then reluctant or unable to meet the costs of private physiotherapy.
- 4.2** The Head of Personnel has discussed the continued provision of a physiotherapy service in 2004/05 onwards and AHS would be keen to provide the service at the rate of £141 per session (5 appointments), equating to £13,000 per annum. This expenditure compares to a projected saving of £135,000 per annum based on salary costs only.

5. TRADE UNIONS

- 5.1** Trade Unions have been consulted and welcome the proposed continuation of the physiotherapy service.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** The Senior Staff Management Team have considered the feedback from the pilot exercise and agreed that it should be recommended to this Committee that the scheme be extended. The cost of the contract at £13,000 per annum will be recovered from service departments based on actual employee usage

7. POLICY/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1** The physiotherapy service will strengthen a number of the Council's managing absence arrangements as well as further demonstrating its commitment to employee health through the Scotland's Health at Work programme.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1** The Committee is asked to:
- a)** note the feedback from the pilot physiotherapy service run during the financial year 2003/04; and
 - b)** agree that the physiotherapy service should be established as part of the Council's occupational health arrangements.

Fiona Lees
Director of Corporate Resources/Depute Chief Executive
GH/EG
22 January 2004

Anyone wishing further information concerning this report should contact
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