

CASE STUDY



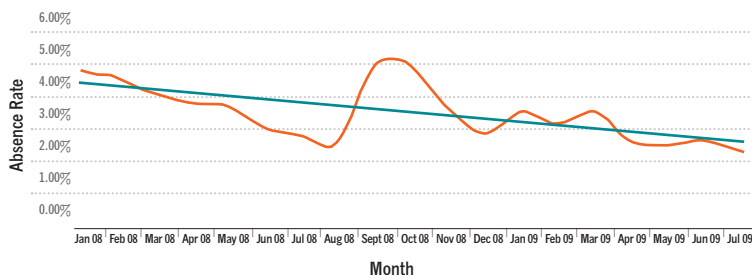
# Masterclass in absence management from FirstCare and The College of North West London



## Background:

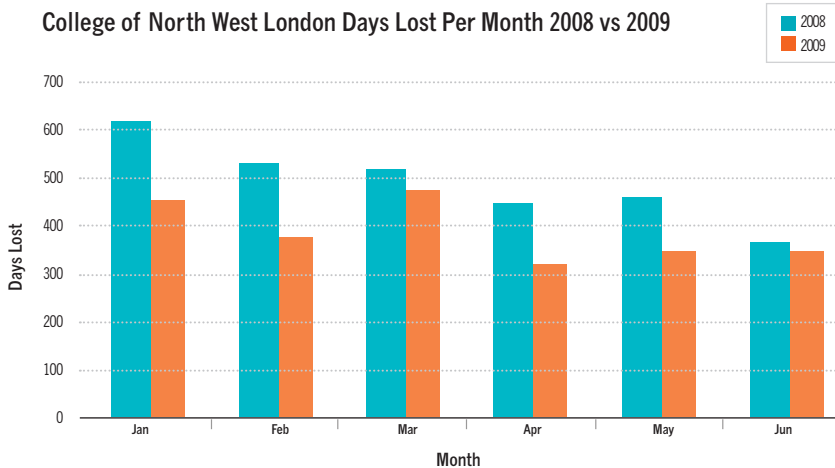
FirstCare's day one absence management programme is helping The College of North West London to reduce absence among its 900 strong workforce of teaching and support staff. From January 2008 to January 2009, absence was reduced from 4.61% to 3.39% using FirstCare's highly cost effective service. This positive trend then continued downwards, reaching just 2.16% in July 2009.

College of North West London Absence Rate Trend January 2008 to July 2009



In real terms this represents 351 fewer days lost to sickness and an average of half a day less sickness absence per employee over the first two quarters of 2009.

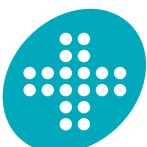
College of North West London Days Lost Per Month 2008 vs 2009



The College of North West London was already convinced of the case for an efficient absence management service, but had found shortcomings in its system, prompting it to replace the incumbent provider and appoint FirstCare instead. Under the previous system, although keen to reduce both long and short term absence, the College was not able to obtain data differentiating medical and non-medical absences.

"Although we could see some benefits of absence management as a discipline, we found the system that we were using lacked flexibility, and wouldn't do what we required," explained HR Director, Anna Openshaw. "We've found the FirstCare approach to be less expensive and very adaptable to our needs. FirstCare are also constantly developing their processes in order to give us a clearer picture and better control of absence." The FirstCare system went live in the College on 1 September 2007, and has since yielded a marked decrease in short term sickness absence.

The absence of just one member of the teaching staff, in particular, has a huge knock on effect for the College. "In many cases, we can't just replace one member of staff with another as would be the case in other organisations; so we need to know as soon as possible that an absence has begun," continues Anna Openshaw. "Before the advent of FirstCare, people reporting an absence would only call in and let us know once they knew that the office would be staffed and the college day had effectively already started. Being able to call at any hour and tell FirstCare that they won't be in that day has meant that we are alerted to absences at the earliest possible opportunity and are able to plan accordingly. With the FirstCare method of collecting real time data, we are much better informed at any given time."



For a free absence assessment or to find out how the FirstCare service can help you reduce absence rates in your organisation please contact us by either calling 08454 565 730, emailing [info@firstcare.eu](mailto:info@firstcare.eu) or visiting [www.firstcare.eu](http://www.firstcare.eu)

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Thanks to FirstCare's specially created software and processes, managers at The College of North West London are immediately alerted when an absence is reported, and regularly updated and advised of the proposed return to work date. Triggers are set in line with the absence policy, and data is provided to assist managers with its application. This best serves the needs of managers and allows them to address and improve potential problem situations as they develop. In addition, line managers can accurately monitor their team's overall absence performance and make comparisons to other departments.

The College can now distinguish easily between sickness related and non-sickness related absence. The real time data also enables the College to pinpoint specific non-sickness related reasons for absence; such as care of a dependent, bereavement, appointments, transport problems or personal reasons. This helps the College to identify and address any ongoing staff concerns and to formulate policies and processes for the future.

One of the central tenets of the day one absence management programme is an effective return to work interview, of which the College has long been a proponent.

"We've always held return to work interviews."

"The advantage of the FirstCare system is that every line manager is automatically sent a form to fill in with the returning staff member. Managers have plenty to remember already, so being given a prompt to conduct the return to work interview in a timely manner guides them efficiently through the process without adding to their workload."

**Anna Openshaw,**  
HR Director

### Stage 1: Employee Calls

a dedicated number is available 24/7 to report absence and, if due to medical causes, is offered a consultation with a nurse.

### Stage 2: Confidential medical advice is provided

employee is given confidential medical advice and a return to work date is agreed.

### Stage 3: Immediate notification of absence

employer receives immediate notification of absence with reason, and return to work date via email/SMS text/pager.

### Stage 4: Medical follow-up

where an absence is for medical reasons, employees are contacted by a nurse for a follow-up conversation; managers are notified by automatic update.

### Stage 5: Return to work notifications (RTW)

manager receives confirmation of RTW and all information required to complete RTW interview in line with policies.

### Stage 6: Triggers

tailored alerts to prompt appropriate action by managers.

### Stage 7: Management reporting

real-time, confidential absence analysis to enable organisations to identify trends and problem areas.

