

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

LOCAL JOINT PANEL – 10 OCTOBER 2007

REPORT BY THE SECRETARY OF THE STAFF SIDE

6(D) MATERNITY LEAVE COVER

WARD(S) AFFECTED: None

RECOMMENDATION - that the report be received.

1.0 Purpose/Summary of Report

1.1 To enable members of the Panel to review further the issue of maternity leave cover.

2.0 Contribution to the Council's Corporate Priorities/Objectives

2.1 Deliver customer focused services by maintaining and developing a well managed and publicly accountable organisation.

3.0 Background

3.1 The Staff Side raised concerns at the last meeting about potential problems which may ensue as a result of the practice not to arrange temporary cover for employees on maternity leave, particularly those in key front-line areas. Paid maternity leave was now extended over a longer period and the problem was likely to become more acute if more women chose to stay off work for the maximum time allowed.

3.2 The Staff Side was concerned that added pressure on staff covering maternity leave where no additional help was arranged could lead to stress related absences, further exacerbating the problem and if not careful the situation could spiral out of control.

3.3 The above situation could also arise out of the need to achieve the 6% turnover factor in the salary budget, where managers were under pressure not to fill posts left vacant for reasons other than maternity leave.

3.4 It was recommended at the last meeting that the Employers' Side would report back to this October meeting.

4.0 Report

4.1 It is hoped that the information made available by Human Resources will include statistics on how many vacancies there are currently, for what reasons, and in which service areas. Other information, which would be useful would be sickness absence figures both long and short term and whether any of these are work related.

4.2 It is acknowledged that Human Resources is fully stretched at the moment and has had more than its fair share of employee absences. If the information cannot therefore be provided in time for the meeting, perhaps it could be circulated to panel members as soon as possible afterwards.

5.0 Consultation

5.1 None

6.0 Legal Implications

6.1 None

7.0 Financial Implications

7.1 If covering vacancies causes stress related absence, the financial savings achieved from the vacancies may be negated by the cost of the sickness absence.

8.0 Human Resource Implications

8.1 Self explanatory.

9.0 Risk Management Implications

9.1 None

Background Papers

None

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