



Promotion of a Healthy Workplace in Kilkenny Local Authorities

Background

Various national agreements made by the social partners place great emphasis on attendance management. Likewise one of the performance indicators for the corporate section of any local authority is the measurement of the number of sick days lost. Arising from these national indicators and from consultations with staff at local level, Kilkenny Local Authorities initiated a workplace health promotion programme in 2005.

Getting the project off the ground

To launch the programme a health promotion day was held in October 2005 with various stands hosting representatives from the HSE Health Promotion Unit, Employee Assistance Providers, The Marie Keating Foundation, The Local Sports Partnership, Fighting Blindness, and our own library staff who gave examples of leaflets and books available on health and welfare. This health promotion day whilst, initiated for the staff of Kilkenny Local Authorities was held in County Hall and thus was opened to the general public. At the end of this piece there is the flier that was inserted in all wage slips promoting the day.

What we've done since

Following this launch, the policy of health promotion in our workplace has been ongoing.

Staff are updated on initiatives through enclosures in wages and the intranet. Ideas are sought from our Partnership Fora and through contact with our Social Club.

Health checks which have been co-funded by the employees with a contribution from the employer and LANPAG have been held in 2005 and 2007. Over 200 participants have taken part in both of these checks.

During 2006 and 2007, a series of informal workshops have been held for our outdoor staff based in the various areas around the county carried out by the HSE. These workshops were provided free of charge. Approximately 150 staff took part in these work shops.

We have an ongoing employee assistance programme with Quinn Healthcare as the providers. The availability of this service is communicated through wage enclosures and through various face to face information sessions provided by the EAP providers with staff. As well as a confidential counselling service for staff, the service provides information on various lifestyle topics such as coping with change, helping quit smoking etc. which are then forwarded to all staff through wage/salary enclosures and email communication.

The health promotion policy is pursued at more formal levels through our Workplace Partnership Committee which has representatives from Management and staff and Union reps and informally through the staff social club. A number of initiatives promoting health eating and physical activity took place in 2008 co-subsidised by the staff social club (to which members pay a voluntary contribution). Amongst these initiatives included a series of Pilate's classes, a boot camp training programme and weight watchers classes. Approximately 60 staff members have taken part.

These programmes have proven successful due to the commitment to the process by Management, HR, and staff through the involvement of the partnership committee and through informal channels such as the social club.

Kilkenny Local Authorities commitment to health promotion in the workplace over the last few years has been recognised internationally through this organisation reaching the final stages in 2008 of the MOVE EUROPE PROJECT which looked at good examples of workplace health promotion in the Private and Public Sector and the identification of models of best practice of each of the EU member states.

The promotion policy will continue in 2009 with increased emphasis on the informal channels such as the staff social club and an examination of the possibility of a revised health check taking cognizance of costing implications.

Some lessons

The initiation of Health Promotion programmes had some cost implications particularly where health checks are being provided. However, there are many initiatives that have very little or no cost implications and hold true for any medium sized organisation in the Private or Public Sector. It is important to remember that for any workplace health promotion initiative to be effective there needs to be both an organisational and an individual focus

- Staff are generally happy to contribute towards health checks
- Employee Assistance Programmes can, with proper training be run in house.
- The health promotion unit in the HSE provides most of their advice and information services for free
- There are a number of voluntary organisations that are happy to provide their services dependent on demand.
- Employers can facilitate Health Promotion by setting up Staff Deduction Schemes for gym membership and providing healthy alternatives in staff canteens
- Organisations can provide premises to hold weight watchers or exercise classes during lunch time or after work.

A further factor is that whilst much of this programme was initiated through the need for compliance with national agreements on attendance, the impetus to embed and continue the programme was provided by staff at ordinary level through the Partnership fora. In an era where pay is frozen or cut and staff are being let go, one of the few avenues that remain to the employer to show care for employee welfare is through the provision of a proactive and inclusive health promotion policy.

For further details contact Adrian Waldron Workplace Partnership

Facilitator, Kilkenny Local Authorities, 056-7794484 or

adrian.waldron@kilkennycoco.ie

FLYER DETAILING THE HEALTH PROMOTION DAY IN OCTOBER 2005



**KILKENNY LOCAL AUTHORITIES
WORKPLACE HEALTH
PROMOTION DAY**

ALL DAY THURSDAY 6th OCTOBER

VENUE: COUNTY HALL JOHN STREET COMMENCING 9.30 a.m.

Why not take a short time to visit County Hall John Street next Thursday. There are a wide variety of exhibitions and information stands with a series of representatives ready to meet staff and answer queries including

- ***The Marie Keating Foundation***
- ***The Health Executive Health Promotion Unit***
- ***The Irish Heart Foundation***
- ***The Fight for Sight Campaign***
- ***Kilkenny Sports Partnership***
- ***BUPA-Information on Employee Assistance Programme***
- ***Aishlinn Murphy-Community Dietician***
- ***Alternative Therapists***
- ***Health & Safety Information Stand***
- ***Details of Health Books available from Kilkenny Library Service***
- ***Information on what offers are available from Gyms around Kilkenny***



For all you Walkers!!!

The day ends with a walk around the Castle Park. The walkers will be leaving from County Hall at 5.15pm.

Bring your own Water!!!

Fruit and Energy Bars will be supplied to all those that complete the walk.

Oxygen to those that don't!!!