



## HOW WE HELPED THE COLLEGE OF HARINGEY, ENFIELD AND NORTH EAST LONDON TRANSFORM THEIR ABSENCE MANAGEMENT PROCESS

### KEY DETAILS:

Employees Covered: **500**

Service Type: **Complete Solutions**

Absence Reduction: **19%**

“Not only have we been able to train our managers. We’ve recently introduced specialist support, providing employees suffering from anxiety with access to CBT.”

**Geoff Mitchell**  
HR Director, CONEL

The College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London (CONEL) is a college of further and higher education. Based over two sites, it employs around 500 people, many of whom work part time.

### **Inconsistent reporting and high absence levels meant that the organisation wasn’t handling management effectively**

Prior to our involvement, CONEL obtained its information about absences via weekly reports from around 40 managers. Geoff Mitchell, HR Director at CONEL, explains that this meant that the college didn’t have an accurate understanding of the true level of absence.

“Some managers were meticulous about providing reports on a weekly basis. However, others had to be chased constantly, which meant that we often ended up with information that was out of date. As a result, we didn’t have a handle on the true level of absence in the organisation.”

### **Following a recommendation from another college, CONEL approached us to manage their absence**

When Geoff joined CONEL in 2012, it was clear that the organisation needed to overhaul its absence management processes, and reduce high absence levels. In fact, CONEL was already considering outsourcing its absence management.

While the college needed to introduce steps to manage absence more effectively, Geoff admits that he was sceptical about outsourcing. In particular, he was concerned that staff would be contacting someone unconnected to the organisation to report their illness. His view was that this would increase short-term absence.



However, after a recommendation from another college – who had been using FirstCare for 9 years – Geoff approached us. Impressed by our industry-leading range of services – including triage, notifications and management reporting – CONEL began working with us in October 2013.

**Since working with FirstCare, CONEL have seen a year-on-year decrease in the rolling absence rate**

After an initial spike in absence figures, which Geoff had anticipated because the organisation was obtaining a true picture for the first time, absence rates began to fall.



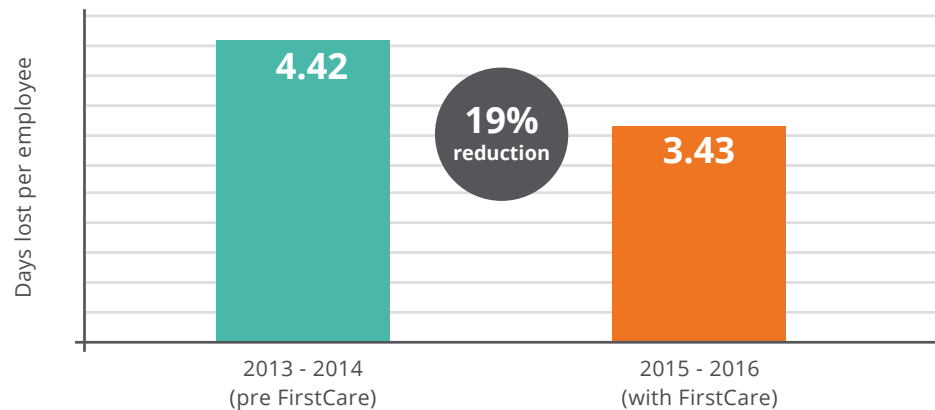
While absence at CONEL has continued to follow seasonal patterns – with obvious peaks during winter – we’ve helped the college steadily reduce its absence rates. 2015-16 figures show a 19% reduction in absence compared with 2013-14 figures, and 7% when measured against 2014-15.

The year-on-year decrease in rolling absence rate represents a reduction of 1.6 days lost per employee.

“FirstCare provides an excellent service. They give staff advice on how to manage their health more effectively, and management the tools to manage sickness absence and plan strategically ”

**Geoff Mitchell**  
HR Director, CONEL

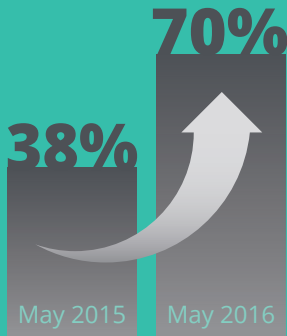
The reduction in absence equals a saving of 1.6 days per employee:



**With our help, CONEL have dramatically improved Return-to-Work (RTW) compliance**

RTW process is a particular challenge for an organisation like CONEL, where a high proportion of the staff work part-time hours, and managers often have to juggle their own teaching commitments with their other responsibilities. As a result, it’s logistically difficult for managers to meet members of their team on their return to work.

With our help, CONEL have dramatically improved Return-to-Work (RTW) compliance



While he acknowledges that this an area where improvements are still required, Geoff explains that things are getting better. In May 2015, CONEL was just 38% RTW compliant, while a year later (May 2016) the figure stands at 70%. What's more, absence in May 2016 was at one of its lowest rates since we started working with CONEL, a reflection of the increase in RTW compliance. Geoff is looking forward to bringing an HR apprentice onboard, which will mean that the department has more resource to ensure that they obtain RTW forms for every absence.

### **CONEL are now able to monitor the reasons for absence, and set up support for employees**

Geoff is enthusiastic about the benefits of having access to information about the reasons for absence, explaining that anxiety tops the list. As a result of this information, the organisation has been able to introduce relevant measures.

Of course introducing FirstCare doesn't solve sickness absence on its own. At CONEL there has been a significant amount of timely, consistent hard work undertaken by the HR team to support managers in reducing sickness absence. But without the excellent management information and real-time sickness data there is no doubt that the reduction would not have been so great.

"Not only have we been able to train our managers. We've recently introduced specialist support, providing employees suffering from anxiety with access to CBT."

CONEL also has a relationship with the British School of Osteopathy, giving staff suffering from musculoskeletal injuries a discounted rate. In addition, the organisation has introduced free flu jabs.

### **We're continuing our work with CONEL, giving them the tools to manage absence and plan effectively**

Geoff is keen to continue working with FirstCare, and has recommended our services to other groups of colleges.

And as for Geoff's fears about CONEL staff reporting sickness to someone unconnected to the organisation? Geoff happily admits they were groundless! Instead, Geoff and his team have access to accurate and reliable data and real-time information, informing strategy and improving process throughout the organisation.

FirstCare

Absence Management Solutions

**Want to know more about effectively managing sickness absence? Or how we can help you reduce absence rates, increase productivity and reduce costs?**

**Call us on 03454 565 730 or email [info@firstcare.eu](mailto:info@firstcare.eu)**