



Left to right: (back row) Amanda Naylor, HR manager; Susan Thompson, PA to director of HR; Maria Warner, head of development; (front) Fiona Holbrough, HR manager; Jane Burtoft, director of HR; Lindsay Jensen, HR manager.

LEEDS MENTAL HEALTH TEACHING NHS TRUST

The team: HR department

Number in team: **18** Number in HR function: **41** Number of employees HR is responsible for: **2,500**

About the organisation Leeds Mental Health Teaching NHS Trust's core purpose is to improve the mental health and wellbeing of the people of Leeds and to provide them with effective, accessible and modern mental health and learning disability services.

The challenge In 2002-03, the trust had sickness absence levels at 12 days per employee – higher than the public sector average of 10.7 days – costing the trust £1.78m, with indirect costs estimated to be a further £2m.

What the organisation did

- Conducted a research project to ascertain causes of stress, the staff support mechanisms and how could be improved.
- With a university research student, designed and implemented, the 'supporting staff at work' programme.
- Introduced a phased return-to-work

scheme after absence or reduced hours.

- Looked at alternative methods of working.
- Extended leave in special circumstances.

Benefits and achievements

- A 1% reduction in sickness absence in 2004-05.
- Staff survey shows an annual improvement in staff feeling supported at work.
- Without the framework, 100% of cases would have resulted in staff taking time off or extending their absence.

The judge says "This organisation has dealt with the important issue of the rights and responsibilities of employer and employees. Too many initiatives fail because the employees or the employer have all the rights but no responsibilities, or vice-versa. Both parties need to accept their rights and their responsibilities. Also demonstrated the value of involving a university research student."