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## **South Liverpool Housing**

**Robertson Cooper Ltd**

**Evaluation of the Well Being  
project – Final Report**

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# 1 Introduction

## The Well Being Programme

South Liverpool Housing introduced the Well Being Programme in October 2001. This programme is designed to support, develop and maintain staff well being through raising awareness and offering practical assistance. It offers all staff the opportunity to receive counselling, massage (head and back), aromatherapy, reflexology and access to other alternative therapies through the workplace. In addition to therapeutic approaches, other development opportunities are made available to staff and all employees can benefit from the provision of Quiet Spaces and a library of material. Staff were made aware of the well being programme through a leaflet and optional training, aimed at dealing specifically with stress and pressure, but also looking at how South Liverpool Housing (SLH) can support people.

Referral to the programme is either at the individual employee's discretion or via the line manager, when well being is identified as a development need. If there is a need for special assistance managers and directors can refer employees for extra help over a prolonged period of time.

The organisation is in the infancy of developing its approach to Human Resource management. It has already instigated a series of staff attitude surveys conducted annually and has developed a process of acting upon the key results. Staff were taken off site to participate in a conference and action planning session aimed at ironing out the issues identified in the most recent survey.

Complementary to these efforts to listen to staff is the development of the Well Being Programme. South Liverpool Housing has been closely involved in the work of the 'Quiet Place project' in local Liverpool schools. The decision to bring the 'Quiet Place' team into the SLH office was in part a reflection of the organisation's perceived need to value its staff alongside the customer. The 'Quiet Places' ethos of working from a positive model of health and well being and using a variety of therapeutic approaches both mainstream and complementary, was in keeping with the dynamic working environment that SLH is trying to offer its staff.

SLH anticipated that the Well Being programme would result in:

- Increased staff satisfaction
- Reduced sickness/ absence
- Reduced staff turnover
- Improved performance against key business targets, including rental income, numbers of empty properties and the progress of the repair programme.

## Evaluation

SLH are committed to conducting an independent evaluation of the Well Being Programme. This is driven by a desire to see if the project is living up to the expectations outlined at the start of the project.

According to the best practice model of stress prevention (HSE, in print) all interventions aimed at helping employees cope with pressure should be evaluated. Substantial learning can be gained through the evaluation of training. In exceptional cases where it is possible to track trends on key indicators using data collected before and after the intervention took place, a greater understanding of the impact of the training can be achieved.

Robertson Cooper Ltd (RCL) have been asked to evaluate the success and impact of the first year of the well being programme. The aim of this evaluation is to gather information about how the well being programme has been used and to assess its success in terms of a number of anticipated outcomes and staff attitudes.

## **2 RCL Approach to Evaluating the Well Being Programme**

The impact of the Well Being Programme has been evaluated through a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches designed with SLH.

Data has been collected from a number of different sources. In addition to business performance against rental incomes, numbers of empty properties and progress in the repair programme, other management information including sickness/absence data, turnover data and the results from the staff satisfaction survey have been made available. This information allows any impact on the bottom line for the organisation to be identified.

All staff were invited to complete a survey on the Well Being Programme. This questionnaire was administered electronically through email. Responses to the survey were confidentially submitted back to RCL. This instrument examined how staff report using the Well Being Programme and looked at their attitudes towards it. In addition, information was collected about the stress awareness raising training offered to all staff and for employees in Speke; questions about the new office arrangements were included.

Complementing the questionnaire data, a series of interviews were conducted by telephone. Interview subjects were chosen at random from a sample of staff that have received additional assistance from the Well Being programme. These interviews provide some in depth information about the impact of the project for individuals and the organisation.

## **3 Demographic Information**

### **Reliability of the questionnaire data**

All ninety employees received a copy of the questionnaire and thirty three employees completed it giving an overall response of 36.6%. This response is sufficient to be able to generalise attitudes and feelings for all employees in SLH.

However, there is a slight concern that this evaluation of the Well Being Programme is biased; as 90.6% of respondents indicated that they had used it.

Although, these respondents are well placed to evaluate the service, they do not give a feel for why others may not use it.

The questionnaire data needs to be interpreted in light of more female staff responding than male employees. Although SLH do employ more women than men, the actual proportions are closer to 60% of the workforce being female and 40% male. 72.7% of females responded to the questionnaire and only 27.3% of males. This is a slight over representation of women.

### Questionnaire Respondents

Employees in the sample were aged from under 21 to 60, most were aged between 20 and 40. For further details, see the table below.

Age	Frequency	Percentage %
< 21	3	9.1
21 - 30	8	24.2
31 - 40	13	39.4
41 - 50	5	15.2
51 - 60	4	12.1

Table 3.1 Information on the age distribution

Most respondents worked for Neighbourhood Services (37.5%), but employees from all the departments responded.

Department	Frequency	Percentage %
Directorate	3	9.4
Neighbourhood Services	12	37.5
Community Development	3	9.4
Development	5	15.6
Finance	5	15.6
IT, Administration, Human Resources	4	12.5

Table 3.2 Information on departments

23 respondents considered themselves to be staff (71.9%). 6 Managers represented a further 18.8% of the response and 3 Directors made up just 9.4%.

Over half the respondents (53.1%) has have been with SLH for less than 2 years, but 25% of respondents indicated they had transferred from Liverpool County Council Housing Department.

## 4 How the Employee Well Being Programme has been used

### Stress Awareness Raising Training

Supporting the work of the Well being programme, SLH has run stress awareness raising training for all staff. Overall, awareness of the sessions was very high amongst respondents and 75% indicated that they had attended, and of this group all found it helpful.

Those who did not attend the stress awareness training were exclusively female, one male respondent indicated that the question was not applicable. (It is not possible to comment if this is a trend or just the result of the gender balance in the overall sample). However, the reasons why most did not attend either because they did not know about it (12.1%) or could not find the time to attend (6.1%).

Respondents were asked why they found the stress training helpful. The graph below shows the most common reasons according to agreement with the agree and strongly agree statements.

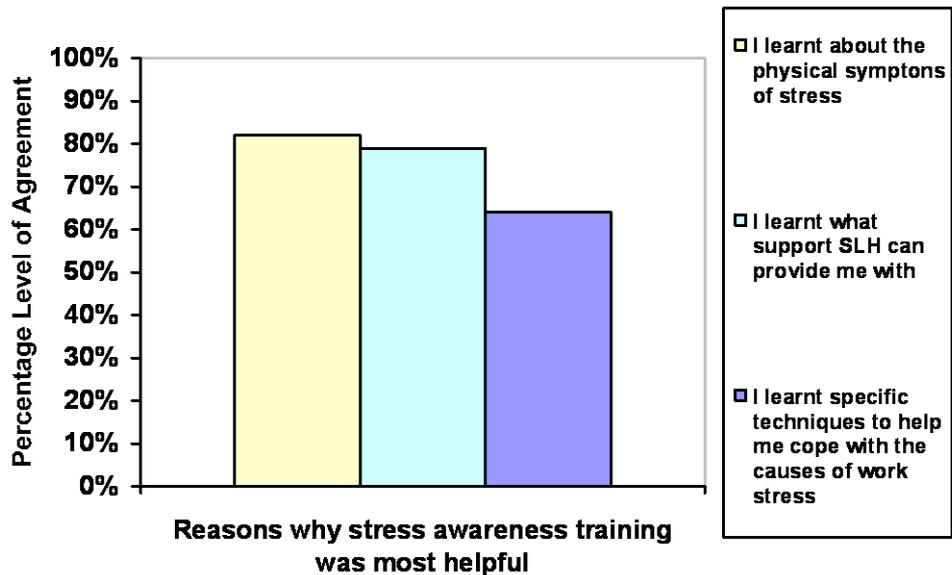


Figure 4.1 The three most popular reasons why the whole sample thought the stress awareness raising training was helpful.

In addition, 69% of respondents indicated that they had been able to apply the techniques learnt to their work life. This suggests that the training is having an impact on their effectiveness at work.

The sample indicated overwhelming support for future stress awareness training. When asked if they would attend future training, 84.8% indicated yes. This supports any ideas that stress training needs to be made an on going activity within the business.

## **Well being Programme**

All respondents agreed that they are aware of the services provided by the Well Being programme. 90.6% of respondents indicated that they had used the Well being programme (29 out of 33 respondents).

Information about the Well being programme seems to have been most successfully disseminated through colleagues (51.6%) and via an email to all employees (48.4%). Team meetings were identified as the least likely source of information about the well being programme.

In most instances respondents wanted to use the programme themselves (88.5%) and used it as a way of learning about keeping healthy (76.9%). Employees also used the programme as a means of tackling work and non-work related problems.

The head massage and other massage services are the best used, with reflexology being almost as popular. No respondents indicated taking up the voucher for developing skills outside of work and the exercise voucher was also not all that widely taken up (only 16.7% had used this option).

The number of sessions of massage and reflexology that respondents report receiving varied widely. For those receiving head massage and other massage, some respondents were taking up to 15 sessions, with most receiving less than 6 sessions. With reflexology, most respondents had about 2 sessions on average with the most received about 8 sessions.

About half of all respondents indicated using the 'Quiet Room' in the Speke and Garston offices.

## **5 Attitudes towards the Employee Well Being Programme**

### **Stress Awareness Training Day**

Staff attitudes towards the stress awareness training were very favourable overall. The comments on the training course collected through the questionnaire were for the main positive. For example,

*'It was probably the best 1 day course I have been on'*

*'It was well run very informative and very enjoyable'.*

Where dissent against the training was expressed, respondents seemed to largely feel that they had failed to learn anything new and had not acquired specific techniques in coping with stress causes and symptoms.

However, in general the employees who attended the stress training reported finding it useful and there is strong support for future training.

## The Employee Well Being Programme

### Attitudes about the access

Attitudes about accessing the Well Being programme are on the whole positive. The programme is perceived as accessible by 60.6% of respondents to use for their own personal development. Even more respondents (72.8%) felt that they could use this provision if needed and an equal number felt supported to use it.

### Satisfaction with the Services offered by the Well Being programme

Overall, 89.8% of respondents ranged from slightly satisfied to very satisfied in their consideration of the overall Well Being Programme. This demonstrates a strong support from employees for the work of the well being programme.

The figures below show details of the support for different key elements of programme.

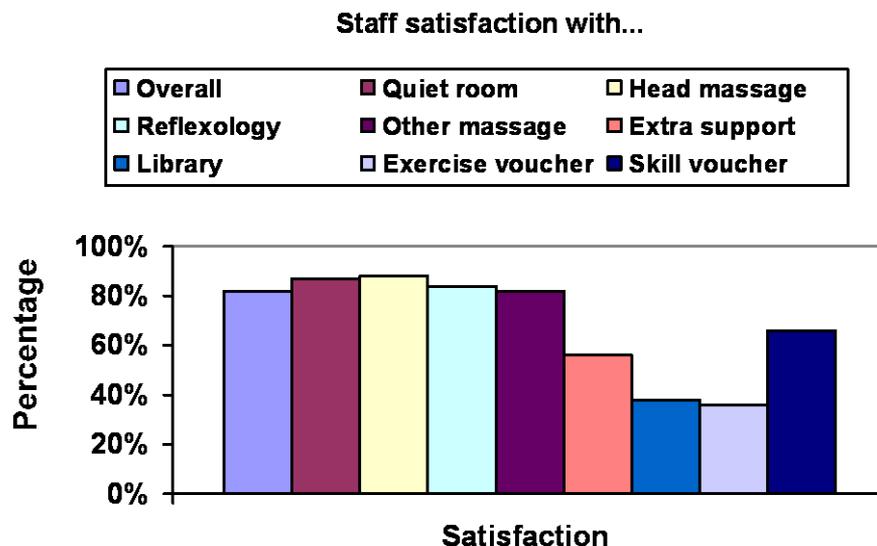


Table 5.1 Satisfaction with key elements of the Well Being Programme

Overall, respondents expressed the greatest satisfaction with the massage provision – especially the head massage. Respondents also expressed high levels of satisfaction with the Quiet Room. Interestingly, female respondents were more satisfied with the well being programme. However, female respondents indicated getting greater satisfaction from the Quiet Room, whilst male respondents were more satisfied with the head massage. Female respondents got the most satisfaction from the reflexology service (88.9%).

### How the well being project has helped staff

Respondents indicated that the top four ways in which the well being programme has helped them. These were through feeling more relaxed, through feeling supported at work, have a more positive self perception and to work more effectively. Two thirds of staff (66%) felt that the well-being programme helped them relax, with just over this figure (68%) feeling it helped support them at work. Just over half (56%) said it made them feel better about themselves, with 52% saying it has helped them to work more effectively.

**Positive feedback on the well being project**

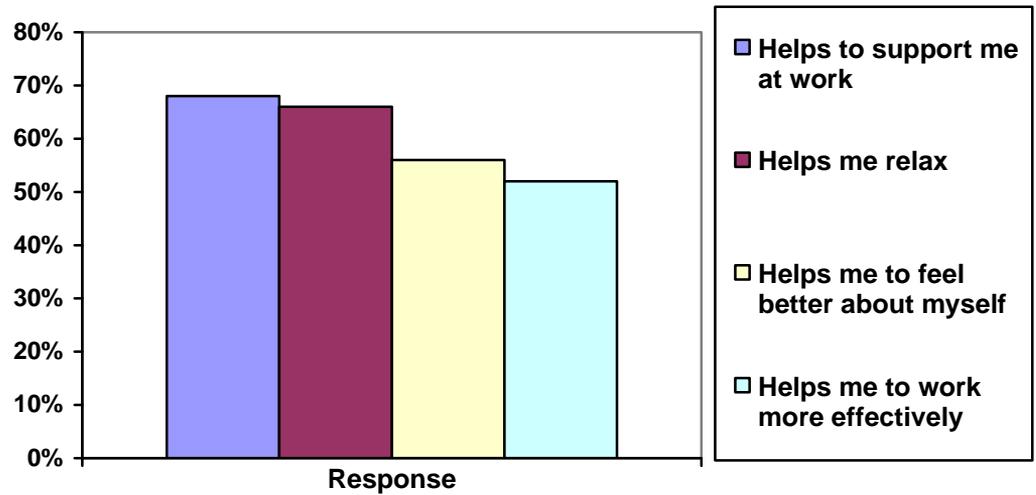


Table 5.2 The top four benefits from the Well Being Programme in terms of percentage agreement

As with the satisfaction with the well being programme, male and female respondents found slightly different benefits from the programme. The benefits identified above are identical to the top benefits for women. However, male respondents indicated that the benefits of the well being programme for them, was the support it offered them at work, the help it gave them to work effectively and the assistance it offered in helping them identify what causes other people pressure.

Respondents were very clear in indicating that they did not feel the Well Being programme was helping them to express their opinions at work (42.0% strongly disagreed or disagreed) and not do more work (37.9% strongly disagreed or disagreed).

Comments collected through the questionnaire indicate that staff feel very positive about the Well being programme. However, these comments are not without reservation. This is somewhat to be anticipated as a new employee welfare provision gets embedded in the organisation.

The following are examples of the comments received through the questionnaire.

*‘Superb but needs to have a more strategic feel - could be better utilised for team building and for project teams as the pressure mounts up.’*

*‘I think that the well being programme is an excellent idea. However, because I work sometimes at the counter and sometimes on the phones I, and the rest who work with me, hardly have a chance to use the programme.’*

*‘Its an excellent programme and really helps me to do my job. I think it needs to be co-ordinated a bit better. Sometimes you can get a massage etc sometimes you can't, often you only find out on the day.’*

## 6 Impact of the Well Being Programme

The questionnaire survey asked respondents to make a behavioural assessment of the impact of the well being programme. These measures are rough indicators of the impact that some people have perceived from the programme.

Given the impact that the Well Being programme is anticipated to have on sickness absence, respondents were asked about the numbers of visits to the doctor. Overall, 82% respondents indicated that since the well being programme has been available they were visiting the Doctor as often or less frequently.

Other informal impact measures show that 72.7% of respondents think that they are coming to work as often or more often since the programme has started.

On a very positive note, 24% of respondents indicated that they like coming to work more since the Well Being programme started and all other respondents indicated that they feel the same (76%).

### Personal Testimonies

The Well Being programme has been made available for all employees, but employees have a special need, they have been referred for additional help and treatment. A random sample of 25% of these employees were interviewed about their own personal experience of the Well Being programme and the impact that it has had on their lives. The individuals interviewed had accessed a range of different services through the Well Being programme on referral by a line manager or a director. The people interviewed had accessed the Well Being programme to help with problems outside of work and to assist with rehabilitation back into the workplace.

Overall the interviewees indicated that their experiences with the Well Being programme had been positive. One interviewee indicated that following the treatments

*'I felt 100% better than before.'*

In all cases the interviewees had been able to resolve or get through their difficulties without an adverse impact on their performance. All the interviewees indicated that the Employee Well Being programme had allowed them space and opportunity to focus on their difficulties exclusively for a limited time period. As a result, time spent at work was also more focused and free from distraction.

The interviewees were asked to identify the key learning from the programme. In line with the objectives guiding the development of the Well Being Programme, all the subjects felt that they had learnt about their health and life style and how to maintain a positive state of being.

The messages about health and well being that staff took from their experiences of the Well Being project varied. In some instances, information about a better diet has been taken on board, whereas for other interviewees the experience of alternative therapy has resulted in a new approach to maintaining family health.

For all employees interviewed, the intensive support offered to them has had a positive spin off. It has made them aware of their value to SLH. In addition, all the subjects are now more intently aware of the support that is on offer to them for work and non-work related problems. One subject said

*'I wouldn't hesitate to raise another issue because I know that I would be taken seriously and not made to feel stupid.'*

The overwhelming response from the interviews was appreciation for the help that the Well Being programme had provided. However, a number of issues were raised about SLH and the relationship with the Well Being programme. The interview subjects perceived that SLH had adopted a view that the well being programme offered a panacea for all ills. Some of the interview subjects and questionnaire respondents indicated that management occasionally felt that the Well Being programme offered better solutions to problems that employees felt should be tackled by managers.

The interview subjects were of a mixed opinion about the quality of some of the line management. In some instances it was felt that managers had adequate skills to cope and assist employees with problems, but for others, managers were thought to be wanting in this respect and the individual concerned had bypassed the manager and gone straight to a director in order to access help. However, this was not thought to apply to all managers.

The interviewees also felt that SLH and the Well Being programme did not always work together enough to ensure that things had been followed up and the relevant people informed.

Other comments collected through the survey indicated that some employees perceived some inconsistencies in the management approach to employee well being.

Other comments included:

Staff morale issues

*'The well being programme is very good, but is totally wasted due to the problem of low staff morale, which should have been addressed first.'*

A call for more team building

*'I think we should have more days that all the staff are able to go on another well being day'.*

Problems about access

*In reality it is made available to very few staff- normally those close to the co-ordinator. Things like massage etc should be made available fairly'*

Management perception

*To spend time in the quiet room is impossible - and my manager would view taking time there very negatively.*

## Hard Data

In order to make a quantitative and objective evaluation of the impact of the Well Being programme information on sickness absence, turnover, employee attitudes and key performance targets have been examined. The following section will identify trends in the data, however, it is important to recognise there are many factors that can contribute to changes in the data.

### Staff satisfaction

The key indicator suggests that employee satisfaction with SLH is increasing, however consistent measures are only available for March and June 2002. The table below outlines the total positive response for key questions.

	March 02	June 02
How happy are you working for the company?	44.4%	46.2%
Do you enjoy your job?	53.3%	55.8%

Table 6.1 Responses to the Staff Attitude Survey

A previous staff survey (June 2001), although not actually asking exactly the same questions, gives a feel for employee attitudes. In June 2001 51% of staff indicated that they found their job satisfying.

Overall, employees are positive about working for South Liverpool Housing. The data across the attitude surveys shows a slight upward trend in the positive attitude towards South Liverpool Housing.

### Sickness Absence

Following the introduction of the Employee Well being programme total sickness absence has reduced to new low level in May 2002. Figure 6.1 shows the pattern of sickness absence over the last year from May 2001 to May 2002.

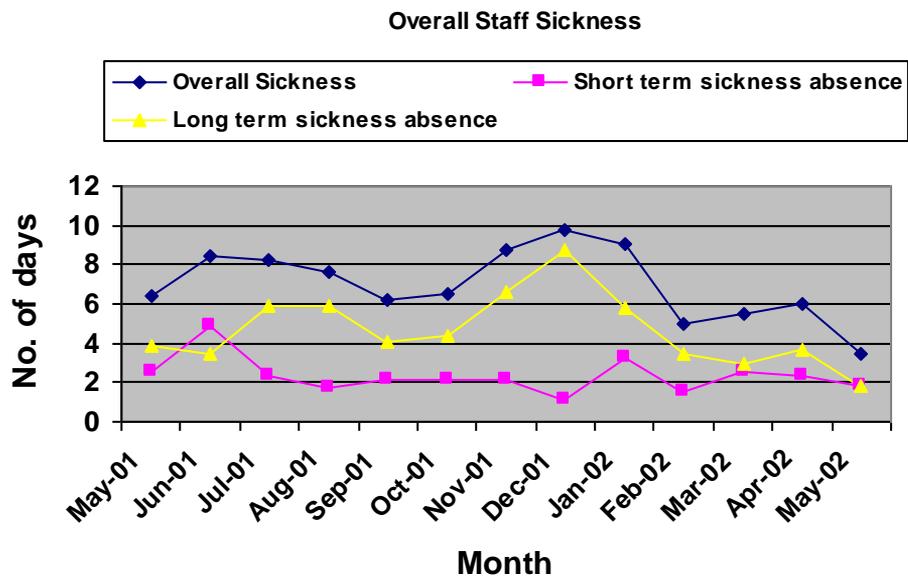
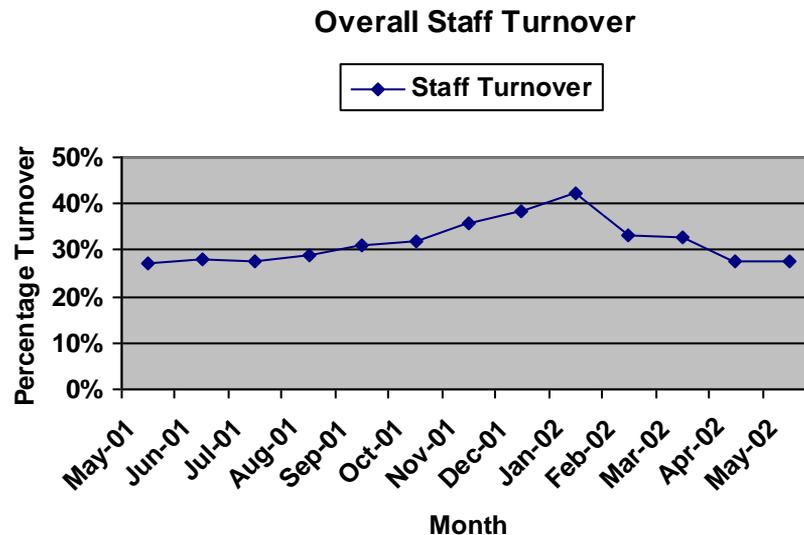


Figure 6.1 Levels of sickness absence for the year to May 2002

The graph shows that overall levels of sickness, as well as long term sickness absence has seen a general reduction following the introduction of the Well Being programme following an initial peak just after the project was made available to staff. However, the levels of short term sickness continue to fluctuate. This supports the evidence that the Well Being project is helping rehabilitate employees on long term sickness.

### Turnover

Overall, the percentage of turnover sits at about 30% for South Liverpool Housing. It peaked at 44% in January 2002, however, this can be explained for a number of reasons not necessarily associated with the Well Being programme. The pattern of turnover appears to have peaked in the quarter following the introduction of the Well Being programme and is now returning to its pre programme levels. See figure 6.2 for details. The patterns identifiable in the turnover data may be explained by other changes in the organisation and may not have any direct connection with the employee well being programme.



### Financial performance

The impact of the well being programme has been assessed against key indicators such as rental income, spending on the repair programme and the costs of empty properties. In the management accounts presented for the year 2001 – 2002 rental income was in excess of budget, but the costs represented an over spend. In the financial year to date (2002 – 2003) rental income is down, but spending in terms of costs have been controlled. Given the cross over between the start of the well being programme and end and start of the financial years it is difficult to provide an assessment of the impact of the well being programme in financial terms.

## 7 Conclusions and Recommendations

In conclusion, responses to the survey suggest that the well being programme has very high acceptance amongst the staff and is used by some to great effect. The evidence suggests that most of the employees are satisfied with the nature

of the services on offer through the well being programme and feel that they have learnt about maintaining a positive sense of well being.

The stress awareness training has also been very well received and most useful because of the information about physical stress symptoms and learning what support SLH can offer. There is a lot of support for further training in this area. The well being programme has had a positive impact in the lives of many respondents and this is reflected in the decreasing sickness absence and downward trends in turnover that are evident in the management statistics.

However, perceptions of the impact amongst employees is slightly muted because of the relationship between SLH and the well being programme. A number of recommendations are suggested therefore:

- Better management information should be identified and used by the well being programme and managers to make the programme of more strategic use.
- South Liverpool Housing are also recommended to conduct a stress or pressure audit to identify the sources of problems for staff.
- In light of the results of this report it seems many employees at SLH are benefiting from your stress management initiatives. However, you might like to consider providing all employees with access to a desk based stress management tool, such a CD rom. This would provide for the number of respondents who commented that the Well Being programme is difficult to access, as well as allowing all employees on going access to support without leaving their desk or workplace.
- Management development training should ensure that people skills are mandatory. These might include stress management training aimed at managers equipping them with the skills to diagnose work related pressure and handle stress interviews.

## **Appendix 1    Attitudes towards the new office in Speke**

Respondents from the Speke office were asked to comment on their new office premises giving their opinion and identifying how they used some of the resources at their disposal.

Although a substantial number of respondents indicated that they did not find their new office environment a source of pressure (45.5%) about a third indicated that it was a source of pressure for them. For the most parts comments indicated that the pressure was less from the physical aspects of the new office environment as from the change in working practice and environment from the old office premises. However, the few comments about the physical structure suggested that employees felt it inhibited team work and communication and that the atmosphere was stuffy and lacked fresh air.

Looking at the changes and additions to the new environment, the fruit provided around the office seems the most well used. 69.7% indicated that they had used this facility. The least well used facilities in the new office are the provision of 'quiet desks and offices'. 78.3% indicated that they had not used these, the informal meeting and chatting points that have been developed in the office are also not very well used. 56% indicated that they did not use these facilities. This might be accounted for by staff's lack of familiarity with these new arrangements and how and when to use them.

Overall, the new office decorations have been very well received. The mural and the plants have been very well received. 84.6% and 92.6% of employees respectively reported liking these features. The new office furniture is also liked by 93.6% of staff. The tactile features around the office were least favourably received. Overall, the comments suggest that employees feel to like the appearance and design of the office.

In summary, the new office has been very well received and the decorative features are well liked by most staff. However, the pressure that emanated from the move to the new offices seems largely to stem from the change in premise and the need for new working practices. In light of some of the feedback, it would appear that employees may not be comfortable with using quiet spaces or informal chatting areas. There may be a need for managers and directors to lead by example in using these areas, especially as it is felt by some that the office is not conducive to team working and communication.

## Appendix 2 – Cost Benefit Analysis

The total cost of the well being programme has been calculated and compared with the tangible changes which SLH have experienced in turnover and sickness absence. Using average figures for the cost of recruitment and the cost of sickness absence (calculated by looking at the difference between October 2001 and May 2002) it has been possible to look at the cost of the well being programme against savings in recruitment costs and sickness absence costs.

These figures must be interpreted as only an *indication* of the financial benefits of the well being programme to SLH. The positive changes in sickness absence and turnover can be attributed to a number of different causes and not just the well being programme therefore these financial benefits must be viewed in that light.

The total cost of the well being programme came to £14,141.56. This is an inclusive figure that equates to a per head cost of £996, based on 96 employees.

On average the overall reduction in sickness absence between October 2001 and May 2002 is 3 days a month. According to figures from HR the average cost of sickness absence for employees in SLH is £76.06 per day (based only on salary and not lost productivity). As a result the tangible change in the rate of overall sickness absence in this period equates to £216.18 per month. Across a 12 month period this is £2,594.16.

The level of turnover in the period October 2001 to May 2002 has decreased by 6%. In real terms this means that on average 6 less employees left the organisation in May 2002 and therefore did not need replacing. The average cost of recruiting one person is £3,054.51. Therefore the savings made on recruitment costs during this period was £18,327.06.

These figures show that the costs savings made against sickness absence and recruitment costs are greater than the cost incurred in setting up and maintaining the well being programme.