
Eircom Men's Health Project: Minutes of Second Meeting

Date: Wednesday 2nd November 2011
Time: 10.20am - 1.00pm
Venue: IT Carlow
Present: Niall Buckley, Colin Fowler, Noel Richardson and John Wallace
Minutes: Colin Fowler

Issues Discussed:

Driver for Project

- Eircom has 6,000+ employees, most of whom are male, and many of whom are older (50 years +).
- There is an increasing recognition of the health needs of male employees within the company.
- One of the main drivers behind this project comes from a resolution raised at a Communication Workers' Union (CWU) conference.
- CWU has been kept updated on HealthNet developments.
- The other Trade Unions (3 - 4) in Eircom are not part of this discussion at present.
- It was suggested by Noel and Colin that meetings should be held with the other Trade Unions - so that they can be brought up to speed as soon as possible, and have their suggestions included.

Data Gathering

- Data has been gathered on sick leave and absences.
- There are 12 categories. Two of the biggest groupings are 'Unknown' and 'Illegible' (i.e. can't determine reason on sick certificate).
- Eircom and Meteor are now one company. However, they (continue to) record sick leave and absences in different ways. This affects the quality of the data collected.
- The data collated will form the basis of the 'business case' for HealthNet. It offers an insight into numbers, cost to the company, types of illness, days lost etc.
- Eircom also covers other health-related expenses e.g. eye tests, spectacles, doctors examinations ...
- A sophisticated and tailored Excel programme has been developed to house this data. This database can be interrogated in a number of ways.
- The next stage of development is to analyse the data and report on it.

Focus Groups and Consultation

- Eircom envisage a long period (8 - 12 months) of consultation with staff.
- The company believe this period of consultation should include running 6 - 8 Focus Groups around the country.
- These proposed Focus Groups will seek to identify what the health issues are for employees, and to hear suggestions as to how they could be tackled.
- Noel and Colin pointed out that this could be a risky strategy - as you are raising these men's expectations that anything is possible and that they have a carte blanche to suggest actions which will then be implemented.
- Noel and Colin suggested that Eircom:

- already knows what the priority health issues are for the company;
- should set-up a Company Steering Group to oversee this initiative;
- must determine what resources will be available to this project before they go to the Focus Group phase;
- should meet with Trade Unions and staff in a Focus Group(s) [not a scoping group] to discuss the company's suggestions for realistic ways to address these needs;
- should abandon the plan for a large number of Focus Groups and a questionnaire - as these will not generate enough new data and will be very expensive to operationalise.

Way Forward

- Eircom has made a bid to a European funder to underwrite this initiative (via Patricia). The outcome will not be heard until at least December 2011.
- MHFI are very willing to be involved in this project. However, as a small charitable organisation, they need to be recompensed for their time in the future (over and above the three days for work to date agreed by Grainne and Noel).
- Noel will write an email to Grainne outlining some of the concerns raised by Colin and himself.
- Noel will facilitate, record and report on a Focus Group. The suggested dates were Thursday 17th, Thursday 24th or Wednesday 30th November 2011. The later date was the preferred option.
- This meeting will be held in Dublin (Eircom HQ?) from 11.00am to 1.00pm with a maximum of 12 participants. The contributors will be drawn from a broad range of workplace settings within Eircom in the Greater-Dublin area.
- John and Niall will be part of this Focus Group - but not Grainne or other members of the Management Team.
- It was suggested by Noel and Colin that Niall and John now need to pull together an action plan which:
 - outlines why Eircom should focus upon men's health;
 - reports on the data generated;
 - indicates the budget available to support this initiative;
 - acknowledges the limitations of what is possible;
 - highlights the findings from the Focus Group;
 - provides a methodology for progressing this project;
 - suggests tangible key outputs and outcomes.