



### **Working in partnership with PES**

In 2007, the level of absence the Midwifery unit of the Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust ranged from between 4.9% to 6.7% with an upward trend. There was concern about both the financial implications for the Trust and the effect the absences had in disrupting the vital services provided by the unit. In April 2007, the Head of Midwifery and her team of senior midwives decided to tackle the problem head on.

Working with the Trust's HR team and supported by employment specialists PES, the team launched a pilot scheme to reduce the rate of absence in the Midwifery team. PES provided excellent advice on current best practice and, together with the Trust's HR team, supported the discussions between line managers and employees to ensure they were handled constructively, sensitively and with an open mind.

As a direct consequence of the success of the pilot scheme, absence rates in the unit have now fallen to between 2.5% and 3.5%. On average this is a reduction of over 2%. The scheme has now been rolled out across the Trust and there are early indications that similar, significant reductions in absence levels and the associated costs are being achieved across the organisation.

PES's Consultants were very helpful in making recommendations for strengthening our procedures and in providing practical "hands on" training and support to both the HR team and to the line managers who were responsible for the implementation of the new absence management process.

**Catherine Oliver**  
**Director of Human Resources**  
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