

## Summary of Questions and Issues raised by the unions

### Q&A's

- Q) What happens if a member of staff is too unwell to call FirstCare?
- A) If a member of staff has been hospitalised or is too unwell to call in sick then a third party could call in on their behalf.
- Q) How will a member of staff know that they can speak to FirstCare in confidence?
- A) FirstCare are bound by the Data Protection Act in the same way that TeamPrevent are and the Occupational Health nurses are all medically qualified and so are able to advise/signpost employees as appropriate. The only information that is shared with BHCC are the start date and expected end date of the sickness absence, the reason for absence and whether the individual has been signposted to seek attention from their own GP or from hospital.
- Q) Could a third party report the sickness absence of an employee?
- A) If an employee was unable to report their absence themselves then it would be possible for a third party to report the absence to FirstCare on their behalf.
- Q) How would FirstCare work?
- A) A dedicated phone line would be set up for Council employees to report their absence from work. The calls would immediately be recorded on the attendance management system and the employee would be asked whether they would like to speak to a nurse regarding their absence at which point support and signposting would be offered to the employee. The Council believes that this service could help to support our employees on their first day of absence from work. Employees will have immediate access to qualified nurses who will signpost them to appropriate support and this will be done in confidence. The manager will only receive an automatic e-mail/text informing them of the employee's absence, reason for absence, expected date of return to work and whether they have been advised to consult their GP or go to hospital. FirstCare currently work with 17 local authorities, including East Sussex County Council (since 2010) and with 14 NHS Trusts including Sussex Community Partnership NHS Trust (since April 2016).
- Q) What if a member of staff has a condition that is covered by the Equalities Act, do they have to declare their condition to FirstCare?
- A) If a member of staff has a condition that is covered by the Equalities Act it is up to the employee what they tell FirstCare regarding their absence from work and guidance will be given to staff on this. It is also up to the employee to decide whether they wish to be put through to a FirstCare nurse to discuss their absence from work. They are not obliged to do so, however, FirstCare provide this service if an employee would like immediate advice/support from a qualified medical professional.

