

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Process

The investigation involved:

- Interviews with staff;
- Reviewing the office incident log covering the period from January to June 2006.

The report covers three distinct areas:

- A specific incident of “high jinks” among a small group of staff;
- Behavioural issues;
- Media leaks.

Scope and findings

The inquiry examined allegations made within the business which could be readily identified and those arising from media leaks from anonymous sources. Many of the latter proved to be without foundation.

1) High jinks

The high jinks incident is itemised in detail and shown to be the basis for the press coverage of “staff caught on CCTV leaping naked from filing cabinets.”

This incident, which actually involved a handful of staff taking some prank photographs of each other for a colleague’s leaving present, was described as the kind of activity seen in a student rag week. This was found to be inappropriate behaviour in the workplace and those concerned were disciplined.

2) Behavioural issues

The incidence of various behavioural issues, although isolated, were of sufficient substance to be a cause for concern.

In terms of specific incidents and allegations: there was no evidence of staff having sex in toilets or brawling in reception, so no action was taken; there was no evidence of breakdancing competitions being held although a member of staff who demonstrated moves to colleagues twice during breaks was spoken to informally by his line manager and has since left the RPA; there were four incidents of vomit found in cups - although no individuals were identified as responsible for this, checks have been stepped up around tea points; there was no evidence of drug taking at work, but management vigilance has been stepped up; one individual had made comments about customers which were leaked to the press. The comments were traced in the customer

records and annotated. Email policy has been tightened up; swearing in the office, staff going drinking to celebrate their notoriety and the nightshift surfing the internet were found to be untrue in the investigation; staff were dismissed for health and safety breaches involving hot plates in the kitchens after hours, the theft of a laptop and the circulation outside of RPA of the comments about customers; there have been incidents involving faeces, female sanitary products and mucus deposited. No individuals have been identified, but staff have been reminded to report all incidents of misconduct to line managers and letters on the office code of conduct have been circulated to all staff.

3) Media leaks

There was no evidence of such claims in the press as: naked leaping from filing cabinets, sex in the toilets, drug taking at work or breakdance competitions.

In examining the comments, which RPA considered as unauthorised, made to the press by individuals under the cover of anonymity, it is unlikely they are classed as protected disclosures under the RPA whistle blowing policy or would have the protection of the Public Interest Disclosure Act. Various recent items of media coverage are itemised and it is acknowledged no individuals responsible for such leaks have been traced.

Action taken

The report focuses on disciplinary action over incidents covered by the inquiry including:

- four members of staff have been dismissed;
- five people have been disciplined with a combination of verbal and written warnings;
- management procedures, protocols and vigilance have been enhanced;
- letters and briefings have been issued to all staff as a reminder of the code of conduct relating to appropriate behaviour at work.
- planned action going forward includes improving security.