

Subject:	Workplace Wellbeing in the Council		
Date of Meeting:	25 January 2018		
Report of:	Executive Director Finance & Resources		
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1 The workplace plays a key role in supporting the wellbeing of staff and improving mental and physical health. Ensuring arrangements are in place to prevent exposure to harm as well as supporting those experiencing mental and physical health issues are fundamental to this.
- 1.2 On average sickness absence costs employers 8.4 days per year. Sickness rates in the council are higher than this at 10.59 days per year. The council is committed to working with staff to provide a positive work environment and support staff to lead healthy lives.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the existing support that is available and outline the work which is underway to improve our wellbeing offer as part of the council's emerging People Plan.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

That committee:

- 2.1 Notes the wellbeing support available to staff and work underway to improve the arrangements in place with additional support and resources.
- 2.2 Notes Health & Wellbeing forms a strand of work under the council's People Plan. (Committee will receive an update on this on 3 May 2018).
- 2.3 Considers member involvement to demonstrate the importance of this work to the council in its role as the employer.
- 2.4 Notes that it will receive a future update from the Wellbeing Steering Group on future priorities with an action plan for wellbeing including resourcing impacts and expected benefits.
- 2.5 Notes the indicators that will enable the council to chart progress.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 As an employer the council cares about the health and wellbeing of its staff and the wellbeing work is focused on ensuring that the workforce is supported to be happy and well both physically and mentally.
- 3.2 The cost and impact of ill-health (physical and mental) nationally in communities and workplaces is outlined in the *2016/17 Statistics for Great Britain*, recently published by the Health and Safety Executive (see Appendix 1).
- 3.3 Employers are uniquely placed and therefore have a key role to play, in particular, through implementing effective arrangements to create an organisational culture that promotes positive health and wellbeing, and supporting those experiencing health issues.
- 3.4 This extends to providing support, including resources and training for employees, managers and those in roles that influence employment practices, health and wellbeing.
- 3.5 The support currently available to council employees of includes:
- specialist occupational health, counselling and mediation services
 - policies, guidance and templated procedures to assist with local arrangements
 - learning and development through the learning gateway which includes online learning as well as tutor-led training
 - a dedicated staff support page linking to useful resources and support
 - advice and guidance from the HR and Health & Safety business partners
- 3.6 Levels of absence, feedback provided through the staff survey, and learning from casework are all clear indicators that more needs to be done to improve the support available. This has influenced changes to improve the council's approach to organisational culture, performance and wellbeing.
- 3.7 As a result a Wellbeing Steering Group has been formed which is developing an organisational framework for wellbeing together with a prioritised action plan for improvements. The group is chaired by the Executive Director, Finance & Resources, and its membership is formed by:
- Trade union and workers' forum representatives
 - Public health experts
 - Front-line staff
 - Workplace wellbeing champions
 - Human Resources staff
 - Communications staff

Working in this way to co-create solutions rather than imposing them will lead to better buy-in from staff and therefore better outcomes.

- 3.8 Wellbeing forms one component of the council's People Plan which aims to deliver a workforce for the future that is reflective of our community, to develop to do its best, and to make the council the employer of choice in Brighton & Hove. A report on the People Plan will be brought to this committee next May. An outline of the People Plan workstreams is provided at Appendix 2.
- 3.9 Early actions already agreed by the Steering Group and in progress include:
- Strengthening the council's commitment to workplace health and wellbeing including formalising the work of the Steering Group in the Health & Safety policy.
 - Agreement for the newly appointed workforce wellbeing lead in public health to co-ordinate the wellbeing action plan so the council becomes an exemplar employer in the city.
 - Approval by the Executive Leadership Team to conduct a baseline Health & Wellbeing survey in January and to be repeated to measure progress (this is distinct from the Staff Survey and it will be designed to avoid duplication).
 - Agreement to prioritise mental health training. Work is already underway to tailor specific training for:
 - managers on how to support staff suffering from mental health issues
 - HR Advisory Services on how to support casework
 - broadening awareness for all staff.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 The focus of the Steering Group is defining aims, outcomes and activities which move the organisation towards proactive and / or preventative measures that avoiding over reliance on reactive solutions which will be targeted in a range of areas including:
- Supporting attendance
 - Mental health
 - Smoking & tobacco
 - Physical activity
 - Healthy eating
 - Alcohol & substance misuse
- 4.2 The areas of scope co-incide with those defined in the Workplace Wellbeing Charter and provide a framework defining best practice; however the Group is very clear that the objective is to achieve better outcomes for staff rather than seeking external accreditation.
- 4.3 Although early priorities for action have been agreed as outlined at paragraph 3.9, a more detailed action plan is being developed by sub-groups within the Steering Group.
- 4.4 The following indicators will be used to chart progress and, where necessary, to inform adjustments to the strategy:

- Staff survey – an improvement of at least 5% in the score related to the organisation cares about my wellbeing
- Improved attendance levels and a reduction in levels of sickness attributable to mental health and stress
- Benchmarks available from the Health & Wellbeing survey (see paragraph 8.2)

Other performance indicators will be developed as the action plan for each work stream develops

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Feedback provided through the Staff Survey has reinforced the need to ensure priorities and focused areas for improvement are tailored to individual service areas as ‘one size does not fit all’. Therefore any action plan agreed through the Wellbeing Steering Group will be adaptable to ensure appropriate fit.
- 5.2 Staff representation through the Wellbeing Steering Group includes trade union and workers forum representation. The wider People Plan was presented to the Joint Consultative Staff Forum on 20th November.
- 5.3 Oversight of the work of the Steering Group is achieved through the Corporate Health & Safety Committee and Corporate Modernisation Delivery Board. Any funding implications will be managed through business cases to the corporate modernisation delivery board.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 Failure to effectively support wellbeing results in a heavy burden being placed on staff, and also adversely affect outcomes for the council’s clients, customers and partner organisations. Therefore the workplace and the council as the employer play a vital role in helping to secure improvements.
- 6.2 The local evidence for the council to prioritise wellbeing is clear and linked to a national trend. Whilst change will take time, need clearly to define objectives, outcomes and activities must be and is being progressed.
- 6.3 Ensuring appropriate resources are provided to deliver defined and timely outcomes will be essential to delivering sustained improvements.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 By themselves, the recommendations in the report above have no direct financial implications. However any significant expenditure or project work arising from the Wellbeing Steering Group would need to be supported by business cases and agreed by the Corporate Modernisation Delivery Board.

Finance Officer Consulted: Peter Francis

Date: 08/12/17

Legal Implications:

- 7.2 The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HSWA 1974), referred to in paragraph 8.1 below, sets out the basic health and safety duties of an employer to its employees. The Act also provides the framework for other health and safety regulations, including the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (the Regulations). The range of legal obligations placed on employers with respect to health and safety is extensive. The particular obligations which apply in any given case will depend on the activities carried out by the organisation and the extent of the risks posed by these activities, as well as other factors such as the number of employees. Employers are responsible for ensuring the health and safety of their employees and those that are affected by their activities so far as reasonably practicable (sections 2 and 3, HSWA 1974). The actions outlined in this report aim to improve employee wellbeing and thereby contribute to the effective discharge of the above responsibilities.

Lawyer Consulted: Victoria Simpson

Date: 11/12/17

8. ANY OTHER SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 8.1 The council's duty of care to employees as defined by the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 extends to the duty to ensure '*so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of all employees*'. The imperative to discharge this duty is moral as well as legal and financial as the consequences of inadequate controls and support can be serious, resulting in harm to those affected, regulatory action may also follow resulting in fines and prosecution.

Public Health Implications:

- 8.2 The baseline survey proposed is part of a national public health approach to needs assessment. This will ensure the council has a coordinated approach based on local need, and also provides an opportunity to benchmark our performance against other workplaces.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 8.3 Mental health is an increasingly recognised issue for the city which follows a global and national trend. It is expected that partnership working will enhance the focus on shared outcomes, in particular health and adult social care integration with the Brighton & Hove Clinical Commissioning Group. This links to the council's Strategic Risk SR20 (*'Inability to integrate Health and Social Care services at a local level and deliver timely and appropriate interventions'*) which is overseen by the Audit & Standards Committee, and owned by the Executive Director, Health & Adult Social Care.

Equalities Implications:

- 8.4 None in addition to the implications set out above.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. 2016/17 Statistics for Great Britain, Health and Safety Executive
2. People Plan Overview

Documents in Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents

None