

JSCC Discussion - Providing support for staff wellbeing

Introduction

The Council is conscious of its responsibility to support the wellbeing of its employees. This is set out in Health and Safety Law as:

It is an employer's duty to protect the health, safety and welfare of their employees and other people who may be affected by their business. Employers must do whatever is practical to achieve this.

The Council goes beyond the basic requirement by providing a wide range of direct support and additional helpful resources for employees to be able to face any wellbeing and mental health challenges. We recognise that it is not just about our duty of care and the legal and moral obligations to our employees, it also reflects that the right support contributes to creating an effective and efficient organisation. Placing importance on employee wellbeing helps us to create greater loyalty with our staff, contributes to better recruitment and retention and better staff engagement and productivity. This focus on wellbeing is in keeping with our values, in particular “*we work together and support each other to deliver the best we can*”.

As an organisation we provide:

- **Individual advice** from the HR Team and signposting to further support.
- **Relevant policies and procedures** to ensure a consistent fair treatment to all.
- **Flexible working options** to support work life balance and help to manage the demands of work, home and busy lives – this can include requests for reduction in hours, compressed hours, term time working, homeworking.
- **Access to trained Mental Health first aiders** – contact details for the MH First Aiders are available on the intranet and all contact is completely confidential (unless there is a safeguarding concern)
- **Regular wellbeing articles** signposting advice and support and giving tips.
- **Advice to managers** to enable them to provide the best support to their team members.
- **Funded Flu vaccinations for staff**
- **Your Financial Wellbeing Workshop** - designed to identify key topics that will help employees strengthen their financial wellbeing by enabling them to make informed decisions when it comes to their financial planning.
- **Menopause kitchen** – this bi-monthly drop-in session provides a safe place for staff to share experiences, discover what support and resources are available or just to find out what the menopause may be like.
- **The Social and Wellbeing group** –organise events for staff to enhance the employee experience and encourage interaction across teams, these activities include a monthly after work get together and other ad-hoc social activities such as cake sales in the office, summer lunchtime picnics and organised walks, designed to support those who may be feeling isolated.

We support our managers, so they are able to provide:

- Regular 1:1's
- Open-door policy
- Reasonable adjustments
- Support for Flexible working
- Encouragement to use annual leave allowance.

We offer access to several external provisions to support staff wellbeing:

- **Occupation Health** can advise on health issues and how they relate to an individual's role, so we can fully support them and their health.
- **Employee Assistance Programme** provides staff and their family with around the clock access to confidential, independent, professional information and emotional support.
- **North Herts BeWell** – a wellbeing and benefits platform which provides wellbeing content including mindfulness, sleep, mental health and fitness and nutrition and discounts and benefits.
- **GP Helpline** allows staff to have 24 hour access to a GP consultation service.
- **Support for staff who are Carers** - Employers for Carers membership which gives access to resources for employees and managers who have working carers as part of their team.

We also signpost staff to other sources of support through our intranet – these include:

- Fertility
- Miscarriage
- Additional Carer support
- Cancer support
- Bereavement support
- Financial wellbeing
- Women's health
- Men's health
- Domestic abuse

Finding the balance

Whilst we have a duty to protect the health, welfare and safety of our employees, there is also a balance to be struck. NHC remains the employer and as such the relationship with staff is contractual.

The organisation can provide some direct support, but it ultimately acts as a conduit to the support available.

Looking forward

We are continually reviewing the wellbeing offering. We will be engaging with staff through a staff survey to understand visibility and suitability of the wellbeing support available.