

JOINT STAFF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE
3 OCTOBER 2019
STRATEGIC DISCUSSION PAPER
MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

There is a wealth of support for staff for all kinds of health related problems including mental health and wellbeing alongside all the work done by our active communities colleagues and a newly formed group of staff working on social events.

Our well@work web page provides information on many health and fitness initiatives, as well as guidance for employees and managers dealing with serious personal or family health issues e.g. cancer.

The well@work page links to the other invaluable tools such as Occupational Health who can advise managers or staff on any health and work issue and carry out relevant risk assessments and offer OH appointments.

The other big contributor is the Councils Employee Assistance Programme. This is an external confidential advisory service. The current provider is Workplace Wellness. The Workplace Wellness advice service is a free to staff, confidential service which offers all Council employees and Councillors can now access this service, expert guidance, invaluable information, specialist counselling and support any time, day or night, either over the telephone or online. Where appropriate, Workplace Wellness can also provide employees, Councillors, with up to 6 sessions of face to face counselling.

This advice service will help people prepare for, and cope successfully with, life's events and challenges and the things that cause individuals and families to become distracted, anxious, or feel out of control. Workplace Wellness can help when people feel they don't know where to turn or who to go to for the right information, their service includes:

- Consumer rights and legal information – benefits, housing problems, tax credits, disability, neighbour disputes
- Debt Management and Budgeting –creditors, financial health check
- Emotional Support – poor work/life balance, illness, crisis, anxiety, loss, self-confidence, workplace pressure
- Family Relationships - communication, marriage, co-habitation, coping with teenagers
- Health & Wellbeing - problems sleeping, fitness, weight management, alcohol, nutrition
- Work and Career issues – change, team dynamics, work overload, conflict

The Council offers people excellent flexible working opportunities such as part time, flexi time and home-working which can support temporary situations for example we can allow people increase their level of home-working to spend more time with their terminally ill relatives. Staff can be referred to OH if their caring responsibilities are affecting their own health, and line managers are advised on any reasonable adjustments that may support the employee

As well as flexible working policies we also have a range of additional support mechanisms for employees:-

- We have promoted National Stress Awareness Day through an open learning session where various resources were available on a drop in basis. Over 40 members of Staff attended. We regularly do similar events all year round.
- The programme of training now groups activities under headings and specifically identifies those related to well being. Posters were recently used to promote a busy programme of activities in the Autumn
- The Active Communities Team have promoted workplace challenges aimed at promoting participation in physical activity, launched the step jockey programme at DCO and used the newly established Wellbeing noticeboards to promote various wellbeing issues including health walks, smoking cessation and mental health issues throughout the offices. The team has maintained better snack boxes providing staff with alternative options to the rest room vending machine.
- Mental health first aid courses were delivered to all senior managers and other interested staff and there are plans to repeat this training.

We are also considering a specific piece of work around financial wellbeing, financial worries are known to be major cause of stress for millions of adults. Money and mental health are often linked. Poor mental health can make managing money harder and worrying about money can make mental health worse.

Our well@work page links to Workplace Wellness and their online support takes people through to lots of links to advice about managing personal finances.

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/money-and-mental-health/money-and-mental-health/?o=6851#.XWIIbvh8Cic>

There has recently been an excellent publication called the Employers Guide to Financial Wellbeing which we are planning to use for our work on financial wellbeing.