
Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources

7 December 2015

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources – Councillor Gannon

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Executive Director of Resources

Ward(s) affected:

None

Title: Supporting Workforce Mental Wellbeing

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive Summary:

To enable the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources to be aware of:

- The actions being taken in relation to sickness absence attributed to stress, depression and anxiety and promoting mental well-being across the City Council.

Recommendations:

Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources is asked to receive this report detailing the actions being taken in relation to sickness absence attributed to Stress, Depression and Anxiety and endorse the actions taken to monitor, manage and promote mental well-being.

List of Appendices included:

Appendix 1 Summary of Occupational Health & Counselling Service Mental Well-being Services

Other useful background papers:

None.

Has it or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No.

Has it, or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No.

Report title: Supporting Workforce Mental Wellbeing

1. Context (or background)

The Council recognises that it has a duty of care to look after the mental well-being of its staff whilst they are at work and to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, that workplaces and working environments are safe. The Council, for some time, has been promoting a comprehensive approach to addressing sickness absence attributed to stress, depression and anxiety that impact upon an individual's mental well-being through prevention, management and support, whether these issues have arisen in the workplace or due to personal circumstances. The Council has in place a variety of different measures/mechanisms to advise managers how to support employees who are reporting sickness absence or health concerns that are attributed to stress, depression and anxiety. Similarly, the Council also provides advice and guidance to managers to support an individual diagnosed with a major mental health condition.

1.2 What is Mental Health?

Mental health covers a broad range of conditions and is not static. For example, common mental health problems are depression and anxiety, however, more major mental health problems can be bipolar and schizophrenia.

Mental health problems such as anxiety, depression or unmanageable stress, affects one in six British workers each year with one in four of the overall population of the UK experiencing poor mental health.

1.3 Addressing Mental Health

Feelings of stress or mental health problems can be as result of a combination of factors, for example, events such as bereavement, relationship breakdown, family or work related issues. Therefore, when employees report sickness absence due to stress, depression and anxiety there can be variety of causes for the absence, including personal factors outside of the work place.

For example, the primary reason for employees accessing the Council's Counselling service in 2014-2015 was due to Family/Personal Relationships (223 employees), the second reason was Stress – Work & Personal (198 employees).

The amount of time lost through stress, depression, and anxiety remains the highest cause of time lost for the authority. Therefore, the Council's focus is to ensure the wider subject of mental well-being continues to be actively championed and addressed across the organisation. The Council is seeking to create an environment where mental health conversations take place, managers feel confident, and employees feel able to discuss and address mental well-being issues.

With this in mind, the Council's Human Resources and Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing team have been working on a programme of activities to complement the existing measures, with the primary aim of early interventions from managers to promote the wider and broader topic of positive mental well-being in the workplace. Mental well-

being protects against various physical and mental health problems. It can help prevent ill-health and support recovery for the employee.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

2.1 Existing Measures/ Interventions:

2.1.1 Promoting Health at Work Process – Through the application of the Council's Promoting Health at Work Procedure, all sickness absence, including absence attributed to stress, depression and anxiety are addressed and appropriate support is provided to employees to help them to return to work or remain at work.

- The Council's Promoting Health at Work Procedure is designed to be supportive to employees and enables managers to identify ways in which the Council can help employees deal with sickness issues.
- Promoting Health at Work meetings are intended to provide structured on-going support to employees to identify ways in which the employee can reduce their level of absence without detriment to their long-term health. To ensure employees are treated as individuals as part of the process, there is flexibility within the Promoting Health at Work process to enable the Designated Manager for example to take into account an individual's reasons for absence, their absence history, advice from Occupational Health and an individual's GP and/or Consultant, their role, medication, effects of the illness, and any further planned treatment when determining how the individual's case should be dealt with.

2.1.2 Application Training – Training is provided to managers to support them with both practical and procedural issues regarding attendance management. As part of this training, managers are provided with advice and guidance on addressing and supporting employees who are either absent due to sickness absence attributed to stress, depression and anxiety, or presenting health concerns, again attributed to stress, depression or anxiety.

2.1.3 Mental Wellbeing Policy – The policy sets out the Council's commitment, the responsibilities of line managers, trade union colleagues and the individual's responsibilities regarding mental wellbeing.

2.1.4 Managers Guidance – A range of documents and sources of support and guidance are available for managers to access, via the Council intranet, to refer to when they are supporting an employee who may have absence due to sickness attributed to stress, depression and anxiety, or who require support regarding their general mental well-being. The guidance information and sources of advice available to managers include the following:

- **Mental Well-being Managers Guidelines** – Provides information regarding managing mental health and stress to promote good management practice, including the roles and responsibilities of line managers in supporting employee mental wellbeing in the workplace and more importantly the actions the line manager/supervisor needs to take.

- **Managers Checklist for dealing with Stress** – Provides a short overview of how to manage stress in the workplace and the steps to take when addressing absence attributed to stress, depression and anxiety.
- **Mental Health Leaflet** – Provides advice and information to employees on managing stress.
- **Mental Wellbeing Leaflets** – Providing advice and information on managing key issues such as bereavement, insomnia, eating disorders and addiction
- **Managing Absence your guide** – There is a specific section for managers on '*how to offer support where there are mental health & well-being issues*', including 'golden rules' to help managers and links to relevant policies, procedures, checklists and scripts.
- **HR Advice** – Managers are able to contact the HR Advice Line or speak to a dedicated HR Advisor for their service from the HR Health & Wellbeing team for advice and support.
- **Medical and Psychological Advice** – Managers, supported by HR, can obtain medical advice to aid them when addressing sickness through the Council's Occupational Health and Wellbeing Service.
- **Emotional Support** – Managers are able to refer employees to see one of the Council's Counsellors for confidential counselling, if appropriate.

2.1.5 Occupational Health, Safety & Well-being Service – The service supports both the employer and employee in managing workplace health and well-being effectively, including issues of stress, depression and anxiety, from pre-employment to assessment and monitoring of employee health. In addition, there is provision for employees to access confidential Counselling. Appendix one provides a summary of the wide range of mental well-being interventions the service offers to managers and employees, including specific resilience based training/awareness sessions, when addressing absence or health issues attributed to stress, depression and anxiety.

2.1.6 Guided relaxation for panic attacks – Guided relaxation is provided by the Counselling Service to help individuals to manage panic attacks, stress and anxiety. The groups consist of eight to ten employees.

2.1.7 Relaxation and Anxiety Management - Continuation of free guided Relaxation for Panic Attacks and Anxiety Management using Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT).

2.1.8 Performance Clinics – A number of service areas across the Council hold regular 'performance summits/clinics' on a monthly, quarterly or as needed basis. These incorporate both the management of sickness cases as well as areas of performance concerns, which in some cases have a direct link.

The purpose of the 'performance clinics' is to provide an opportunity for management with the relevant Head of Service / Assistant Director, to review sickness absence and performance cases within a given area. This mechanism provides further opportunities to review the reasons for sickness absence, for each case and to ensure the appropriate support or referrals are put in place to ensure any employee is either supported back or maintained at work.

This enables the advice, support and resources to be tailored and has proved to be very useful in making a positive impact in the working environments and on attendance levels.

2.1.9 Be Healthy Be Well Newsletter – As part of this very popular newsletter, there is a specific section called 'Be Calm'. In this section, the Occupational Health & Counselling, Service provides topical advice and information regarding mental health and well-being for all employees.

2.1.10 Emotional Support Focus Groups – Specific emotional support focus groups have been provided to employees working in the MASH Team to better support Social Workers. The focus groups are to be rolled out to other social work teams.

2.1.11 Reasonable Adjustments – Are considered for an employee with a stress related or clinical diagnosis. Examples of such adjustments can be training, temporary reduction in workload, temporary reduction in contact with the public, reducing working hours on a temporary basis, regular informal meetings with the employee to maintain communication, mediation for dealing with issues regarding supervisors or problems with colleagues.

2.1.12 Workplace Place Wellbeing Audits – These are carried out based on sickness absence information for key health issues, including stress. An Audit report and a solution focused action plan is provided to all areas that undergo an audit. A review is carried out within two years as part of occupational health and safety monitoring.

2.2 New Mental Well-being Programme

2.2.1 Mandatory Well-being Audits – Starting on the 1 November 2015 a programme of audits are being carried out across the Council to make sure all employees are receiving the mental health support they need. The programme will be based on sickness absence statistics from key areas such as stress, gastric problems and muscular-skeletal conditions. The audits are designed to help managers understand stress factors and levels within different areas of the Council and will provide vital information that can help reduce stress and improve absenteeism. The Health and Safety Strategy Group and the Joint Health and Safety forum will monitor the audit programme and outcomes.

2.2.2 Mental Health Awareness Sessions – Delivered through partnership working between the Counselling Service and MIND awareness sessions were delivered on the 11 February 2015 and 4 November 2015 and these sessions were advertised for managers and supervisors to attend. The sessions focused upon promoting understanding of mental health issues and how positive mental well-being can be promoted in the workplace. The sessions also explained and reinforced the support available within the organisation, to better equip managers in proactive interventions.

2.2.3 Cancer Resource for Managers – This is a resource on the Intranet primarily aimed at managers but is also valuable information for all employees. It is linked

with the Macmillan Web Site and the resources and support within the organisation and includes such information as access to support, managing a diagnosis, carer support and available benefits.

- 2.2.4 Cancer Resources for Managers Awareness Sessions** – These are short sessions for HR and managers carried out by the Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing team to raise awareness around the available resources and answer any questions.
- 2.2.5 Emotional Resilience E-Learning** – Aimed at all employees, to help promote positive mental well-being, building life skills and resilience, which translates into both work and home activities.
- 2.2.6 Alerts** – The activation of a ‘pop up’ message alerting managers to the advice that is available when any periods of absence attributed to stress, depression and anxiety sickness are reported via Resource link.
- 2.2.7 Mental Health & Well-being Toolkit** - The focus is to provide key information in a user friendly, structured and efficient manner and in addition, hopefully develop manager’s confidence and knowledge in managing stress in the workplace, to assist employees accordingly when mental health issues arise.
- 2.2.8 Well-being at Work E- Learning Training** – This training is delivered in three modules: **My Well-being** – to enable everyone to gain a fuller understanding around their mental well-being; **Your Well-being**; focused at managers and promoting positive mental well-being in the workplace; **My Organisation and Well-being** – giving an organisational overview.
- 2.2.9 Poster Campaign** – Working with the Communications team a poster campaign is being developed to increase awareness and understanding within the workplace, and to create a culture where employees feel able to have mental health conversations and feel comfortable to seek support.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

No consultation has been undertaken.

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

None.

5. Comments from Executive Director, Resources

5.1 Financial implications

Sickness absence impacts on the ability of the Council to deliver its services with replacement cover required in many service areas at an additional cost to the Council.

5.2 Legal implications

There are no legal implications resulting from this report.

6. Other implications

There are no other specific implications.

6.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's key objectives/corporate priorities (corporate plan/scorecard)/organisational blueprint/LAA (or Coventry SCS)?

Sickness absence is one of the Council's corporate plan targets and performance is reported to Cabinet Member (Strategic Finance & Resources) on a quarterly basis with the final quarter containing the out turn report.

6.2 How is risk being managed?

The amount of time lost through stress, depression, and anxiety remains the highest cause of time lost for the authority. Therefore, the mental well-being programme and the Council's Promoting Health at Work strategy will require further on-going development to examine more intensively issues such as working conditions, underlying causes for stress, depression and anxiety and feedback and learning from managers and employees on new mental well-being initiatives, to ensure the measures put in place support and address absence attributed to stress, depression and anxiety are effective.

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

Human Resources

The HR Health and Well-being team and the Occupational, Health, Safety and Wellbeing team, support absence management across the whole City Council. The teams support managers to deal with all types of sickness, including absence attributed to stress, depression and anxiety, promptly and consistently within all Directorates.

Information and Communication Technology

Improvements will continue to be made to the reporting process through Resource link to improve management action when addressing absence attributed to stress, depression and anxiety.

Trade Union Consultation

Consultation with the trade unions is on-going through the quarterly Promoting Health at Work meetings regarding the management of sickness absence attributed to stress, depression and anxiety and the mental well-being programme of activities.

6.4 Equalities/EIA

The application of the sickness absence management processes are continually reviewed to ensure compliance with the Council's duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. No equality impact assessment has been carried out as the recommendations do not constitute a change in service or policy.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

None.

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

None.

Report author(s):**Name and job title:**

Jaz Bilen, HR Business Partner

Directorate:

Resources

Tel and email contact:

024 7683 1054

jasbir.bilen@coventry.gov.uk

Enquiries should be directed to the above person.

Contributor/approver name	Title	Directorate or organisation	Date doc sent out	Date response received or approved
Contributors:				
Angie White	Occupational Health, Safety & Wellbeing Manager	Resources	13/11/2015	18/11/2015
Louise Hughes	Senior Accountant	Resources	13/11/2015	18/11/2015
Usha Patel	Governance Services Officer	Resources		18/11/2015
Names of approvers: (officers and members)				
Shokat Lal	Assistant Director	Resources	13/11/2015	18/11/2015
Julie Newman	Children & Adult Legal Service Manager	Resources	13/11/2015	18/11/2015
Councillor Gannon	Cabinet Member	Coventry City Council	20/11/2015	23/11/2015
Chris West	Executive Director	Resources	13/11/2015	18/11/2015

This report is published on the Council's website:

www.coventry.gov.uk/meetings

Summary of Occupational Health & Counselling Service Mental Well-being Services

Summary of Counselling Services

- Mental Well-being Policy and Guidelines
- Manager Stress Risk Assessment templates and support
- Clinical evaluation tools for depression and anxiety
- One to one counselling: face to face,
- Telephone and e-mail counselling
- Guided relaxation for panic attacks and other distressing symptoms
- CBT groups for depression and anxiety
- On-line CBT for depression and anxiety
- Carer Group Support
- Bereavement counselling
- Well-being Days
- Team Building
- Mediation
- De-briefing
- Addiction Management Programme
- Support for employees with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
- A Mental Well-being clinic for Whitley Depot for direct support with mental health issues.
- Emotional Support Group for Social Workers

Training:

- Stress Risk Assessment for Managers
- Counselling Skills for Successful Management
- The Human Element in Conflict and Aggression
- Creating Self Esteem
- Developing a Team - A psychological approach to overcoming problems within teams
- Dealing with Dysfunctional Relationships at Work
- Professional Boundaries
- Transactional Analysis for Professional Development
- Alcohol Awareness
- The Psychology of Addiction
- Anger Awareness
- Beating Stress for Employees
- Emotional Resilience Training
- Bounce Back – e learning