

Trafford Council Employee Health and Wellbeing Strategy

August 2016

Introduction

Trafford Council recognises the importance of supporting and promoting the health and wellbeing of its employees. The current pressures on public finances from the economic downturn make it vital that we use all our resources as effectively as possible, which means investing in the health and wellbeing of our workforce. This is also of paramount importance at a time of significant organisational change.

There is strong evidence to show that work is generally good for people's physical and mental health and wellbeing. Healthy and well-motivated employees can have an equally positive impact on the productivity and effectiveness of services.

Generally a healthy workplace and a healthy workforce will assist to:

- Reduce levels of ill health and injuries within an organisation
- Reduce the incidence of absence levels and the duration of absence through bringing workers back to work more quickly
- Improve levels of work satisfaction and employee morale
- Improve staff retention and lower employee turnover
- Improve the effective and efficient delivery of services and a workforce that is more resilient and positively responsive to organisational change and development

1. What is health and wellbeing?

“Health and Wellbeing is about being emotionally healthy as well as physically healthy. It’s feeling able to cope with normal stresses, and living a fulfilled life. It can be affected by things like worries about money, work, your home, the people around you and the environment you live in. Your wellbeing is also affected by whether or not you feel in control of your life, feeling involved with people and communities and feelings of anxiety and isolation.”

Source: National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) 10

The Office for National Statistics has created an interactive narrative in the link below. This gives an overview of the many interlinking components that have an influence on the population’s wellbeing with associated national statistical information. It also assists in informing a strategy for tackling health and wellbeing issues within Trafford Council.

<http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/HTMLDocs/dvc146/wrapper.html>

2. National and local strategic context

The Health and Wellbeing Strategy has been developed in cognisance of national and local advice and guidance.

The significant role of a healthy workplace in relation to the positive impact it can have in the health and wellbeing agenda was highlighted in the following publications:

Dame Carol Black's review 'Working for a Healthier Tomorrow' 2008 and the subsequent government response, highlighted the key role of the workplace in:

- Prevention of illness and early intervention for those who suffer ill health
- Promotion of health and well-being at work
- Improving work and workplaces
- Supporting people to work

In 2008 the New Economics Foundation (NEF) was commissioned in 2008 as part of a Government Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project to develop evidence-based actions to improve personal well-being. The report 'Five Ways to Wellbeing' details five actions that are important for individuals to build into their day-to-day lives:

- Connect (With the people around you)
- Be active
- Take notice (Being self-aware and reflecting on surroundings, feelings etc.)
- Keep learning
- Give (To others)

In June 2015 (updated March 2016), the National Institute for Health Care and Excellence (NICE) published the guidelines 'Workplace Health: management practices (NG13)' Based on extensive evidence, the guidelines focus on how employers can improve the health and wellbeing of employees. Key aspects of the guidelines which could form a strong basis for this strategy including:

- Organisational commitment
- Mental wellbeing and the physical environment
- The role of senior leadership, line managers and leadership styles

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has recently published its 2016 Strategy Document 'Helping Great Britain work well - A new health and safety system strategy' consisting of 6 key themes. Two themes of particular relevance within the workplace health and wellbeing agenda are:

- Tackling ill health – focusing on the preventability of work related ill health
- Managing risk well – sensible and proportionate risk management to provide positive outcomes including reduced sickness absence, lower costs and a good reputation.

Our recently published [Public Health Annual Report 2015](#) has also provided a useful overview of the health position within Trafford, key areas of focus and work being undertaken to improve the health of the population.

3. Our approach to development of an employee health and wellbeing strategy

We are committed to being an exemplary employer that recognises the importance of staff health and wellbeing for organisational effectiveness and we already undertake a wide variety of related activities and initiatives to support staff. By adopting this strategy, we aim to provide a more cohesive approach to embedding a culture that supports and improves the health and wellbeing of our employees and maximising the associated benefits that have been outlined previously in paragraph 2.

We are focused on ensuring effective staff engagement takes place throughout the organisation and have developed an approach to ensure that our corporate priorities are met and services are successfully transformed through our Reshaping Trafford transformation programme. Delivering the health and wellbeing strategy is intrinsically linked with & supports the achievement of the staff engagement agenda, in providing a safe and healthy workplace, offering early intervention support services, promoting health and wellbeing initiatives and supporting staff through organisational change.

The pace and scale of change within our organisation is extremely fast and significant. Staff are working even harder to deliver services with ever more reduced resources and accordingly the health and wellbeing strategy can support them in this demanding work environment. Linked closely with the wellbeing agenda, initiatives such as 'Working Smarter' have been revisited as part of this strategy to encourage our staff to have more work-life balance by removing unnecessary layers of bureaucracy. Managers are required to role-model positive behaviours through activities such as improved email etiquette - minimising email over weekends, only copying in essential recipients and 'email light days' – and encouraging staff to talk to each other face to face.

4. Strategic aims and objectives

The overarching aim of the strategy is to provide an integrated and cohesive culture that fully supports and improves the health and wellbeing of our employees.

Our health and wellbeing objectives have been developed to achieve the following:-

- Provide a safe and healthy workplace for our employees;
- Improve the physical and mental wellbeing of our workforce;
- Reduce the frequency and duration of staff absence through ill health or injury;

- Support employees with health conditions with early and comprehensive interventions to maintain access to or remain in work;
- Provide staff with rewarding jobs that add value;
- Improve staff satisfaction and morale;
- Support staff specifically through periods of change and uncertainty at work;
- Improve staff understanding of the importance of taking steps to improve their own health;
- Encourage and support our employees to develop and maintain healthy lifestyles

The strategy should provide the foundation for Trafford Council to lead as an exemplar both in supporting our own workforce but also in clearly addressing key health and wellbeing matters that affect the Trafford community as a whole. Many of the workforce also reside in the borough of Trafford. Understanding and being supported to develop healthy lifestyles will help staff promote these to others, whether in their role as service providers or as residents.

As such, the health issues highlighted in Public Health Annual Report and proposed work streams to be delivered through Trafford’s Health and Wellbeing Partnership Board Strategy are mirrored within the strategy. These issues include:

- Increasing healthy life expectancy
- Reducing physical inactivity
- Addressing smoking and alcohol misuse
- Reducing the impact of poor mental health
- Good quality jobs

5. Key themes

To deliver the aims and objectives of the strategy, four key themes have been established that will provide the framework for a series of ongoing and new interventions to improve the health and wellbeing of staff. These link closely with health and wellbeing guidelines, themes and work streams identified nationally and locally.

Theme	Description
Healthy Lifestyle	Supporting staff to choose and maintain positive lifestyle and health choices
Mental Wellbeing	Prevention, early intervention and support for staff to improve their mental wellbeing to keep them productive in work or bring them back to work as soon as possible
Safe and Healthy Workplace	Providing a workplace where risks are sensibly and effectively managed, staff welfare is ensured and staff have the competence to complete their role safely
Workforce Engagement	Supporting a robust communication and engagement programme with staff

Further detail of existing and potential interventions under each key theme is detailed in the document appendix.

Linking closely with these key themes are the evidence based actions for individuals identified in the 'Five Ways to Wellbeing' report detailed previously. These can be incorporated as part of the intervention programme and will provide the foundation for effective communication of the strategy to employees as part of workforce engagement.

6. Delivery of the strategy

A Health and Wellbeing Core Strategy Group will be established consisting of key partners including UNISON to implement the strategy. It is not possible to deliver the strategy in isolation and positive and constructive partnerships are paramount to secure commitments to drive the strategy forward. Engaging with our trade unions also forms a vital part of delivery of the strategy.

A considerable focus for the strategy will be mental wellbeing. Currently, a significant piece of collaborative work is being developed with Unison to develop mental wellbeing support for managers and staff including:

- Review and explore the range of mental health support services available to the workforce, including collaborative opportunities across Greater Manchester, and ensuring the support is accessed and fully utilised;
- Development of staff awareness and improved signposting to available services;
- Development of mental health awareness training for managers to respond effectively and support the health needs of staff.

The group will establish a detailed action plan with clear prioritised interventions and outcomes based on the 4 themes detailed previously. Many interventions will also cross-cut the four themes in delivering the strategy. Each deliverable outcome will have assigned lead responsibilities and timeframes for delivery.

As a recently published and updated document, the NICE guidelines 'Workplace Health: management practices (NG13)' previously detailed, will assist in providing a structure for delivering the strategy.

The action plan will be a regularly reviewed and be a dynamic document that will evolve as the strategy is implemented. The progress of the strategy and action plan will be reported through the relevant forum such as the Employment Committee on an appropriate frequency to be determined.

Support will only be effective if individuals are willing to take ownership for improving their own wellbeing. To facilitate this, the strategy will deliver a range of interventions for staff to provide a safe, secure and positive working environment.

In return, we expect staff to take responsibility for improving their own health and wellbeing, taking advantage of opportunities and actively seeking support where appropriate.

7. Evaluation of the strategy

Effective evaluation of the strategy will be established through the collation of key health and wellbeing data which includes:

- Sickness absence data including the cause and rates of absence
- Relevant injury and accident data
- Overview of occupational health referral data
- Staff survey information

The data will form the basis for performance indicators to measure the success of the strategy. This will be combined with narrative reports providing updates on health and wellbeing interventions, schemes, initiatives etc. that have either been established or developed to improve the wellbeing of the workforce in line with the aims and objectives of the strategy.

8. Communication

Communicating the outputs and benefits of the strategy to staff is a vital part of the 'Workforce Consultation and Engagement' theme. It is important that effective communication enables staff to feel involved in the delivery and development of the strategy. A variety of methods will be used and developed including initiative branding, launch events, an improved intranet site and regular updates through the Council communication channels.

Staff views will also be obtained to gain further information on improvements and changes that can be made to add value to the strategy.

9. Conclusion

This strategy document details a framework for Trafford Council to provide a workplace environment that fully supports the health and wellbeing of Trafford employees and emphasises the positive impact the workplace can have on individual wellbeing.

The strategy requires the commitment of Senior Management, Elected Members, managers, trade unions and staff to effectively implement and embed it within the organisation. To do so would show Trafford Council as an exemplar employer in making it's employees a more positive, healthy, happy and productive workforce.

Appendix

Current and potential interventions under the four key themes:

Healthy Lifestyle Supporting staff to choose and maintain positive lifestyle and health choices	
Intervention	Delivery
Alignment to public health national priorities	Promoting national health initiatives and campaigns <i>e.g. Active Challenge, Stoptober, Dry January, National cycle to work day</i>
Access to health and fitness programmes and services	Incentivising access to health and fitness opportunities <i>e.g. Discounted gym membership and fitness sessions, health and fitness classes arranged at Council venues</i>
Supporting staff in active travel	Supporting staff with the facilities and incentives to actively travel to, from and during work <i>e.g. cycle to work schemes, cycle pool, changing facilities, 'walk a marathon' activities</i>
Active challenges	Encourage and promote the participation in staff active challenges for health and fitness improvement and social opportunities <i>e.g. Corporate entry to mass participation events, football, rounders, sports day, tug of war, 'walk a marathon' activities</i>
Access to health and nutrition assessments and advice	Providing staff with advice and assessments to make informed health choices <i>e.g. Provision and signposting to health matters information, Health and Wellbeing events including a variety of health checks, advice on exercise, smoking cessation, alcohol, holistic therapies etc.</i>
Ill health prevention	Provision of staff services to prevent or minimise the impact of ill health <i>e.g. annual staff flu jabs for staff via Lloyds pharmacy, Connect Physio service</i>

Mental Wellbeing Prevention, early intervention and support for staff with mental health conditions to keep them in work or bring them back to work as soon as possible	
Intervention	Delivery
Stress and mental wellbeing management	Ensuring the support to staff for managing mental wellbeing <i>e.g. Developing the stress management policy/guidance, review and implementation of the occupational health provider Health Management Ltd for early intervention support and guidance for managers and staff with counselling services through Health Assured, access to a local mental health support services, awareness and potential further training for managers, collaborative opportunities across GM for enhancing community mental health support</i>
Organisational change management	Effective management of the impact of change on staff <i>e.g. Communication strategies and consultation in line with staff engagement agenda, occupational health and stress support, re-introduction of work-life balance initiatives e.g. 'working smarter'</i>
Reward and recognition – Employer of choice	Rewarding employees for their positive contribution to Trafford <i>e.g. Employee recognition awards, long service awards, celebrating success salary sacrifice schemes, access to health and fitness events, Trafford Rewards</i>
Charity work	Supporting altruistic behaviour for positive staff wellbeing <i>e.g. Comprehensive fundraising programme including dress down days, quizzes, cake sales, charity sporting events</i>

Safe and Healthy Workplace	
Providing a workplace where risks are sensibly and effectively managed, staff welfare is ensured and staff have the competence to complete their role safely	
Intervention	Delivery
Robust and embedded health & safety and HR policies and guidance	Established policies and guidance to support the health, safety and wellbeing of staff and resolution of employment issues <i>e.g. regular review and development of policies and guidance that support wellbeing, development of a Council health, safety and wellbeing policy, developing stress management guidance</i>
Occupational health services	Delivering early intervention support to minimise and manage the impact of ill health <i>e.g. Developing and improving the new collaborative Health Management Ltd Occupational Health Contract, delivery of the Health Assured Counselling Services</i>
A proactive and reactive health and safety advisory service providing support throughout the organisation	Support to managers and staff with advice on risk management and in response to incidents and ill health <i>e.g. Robust advisory and investigative service, increased focus on issues of greatest risk or higher rates of ill health injury or absence</i>
Active staff and union consultation processes	Effective consultation and communication of health and wellbeing issues <i>e.g. Joint Consultative Committee Processes in place, reporting of wider health and wellbeing issues</i>
Integrated and supportive induction and learning and development process.	Providing the foundation and development for competent staff <i>e.g. Induction and learning and development opportunities available through the established workforce development programmes, further integration of Health and Wellbeing support</i>

Workforce Consultation and Engagement	
Supporting a robust communication and engagement programme with staff	
Intervention	Delivery
Staff consultation	Obtaining staff base line information to inform the delivery of the strategy <i>e.g. Staff survey on health and wellbeing knowledge, perceptions, expectations and needs</i>
Communication	The effective communication of health and wellbeing key messages <i>e.g. development of Health and Wellbeing branding, staff intranet site, improved signposting and integration with HR, Health and Safety and Occupational health websites</i>
Staff engagement	Effective integration of health and wellbeing with the staff engagement agenda <i>e.g. Health and Wellbeing forms an integral part of staff engagement processes including induction, PDR's, 1 to 1's, sickness absence management and JCC's</i>
Management buy-in	Securing the support of managers for health and wellbeing. <i>e.g. selling the benefits of reducing sickness/absenteeism, a happier healthier workforce and increased productivity, development of briefings and training.</i>