

Welfare and Wellbeing Support and Initiatives for BCKWN Employees

1 Introduction

Through Health and Safety legislation employers have a 'duty of care' to their employees. This means they must do all they reasonably can to support their employees' health, safety and wellbeing (including treating mental and physical health as equally important).

The Council's health, safety and welfare policy sets out how the Council recognises and accepts its responsibility as an employer to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all employees. It also outlines how the Council will endeavour to meet this responsibility, so far as is reasonably practical, and the roles and responsibilities at all levels of management within the Council for the health, safety and welfare of employees whilst they are at work.

It goes on to set out the responsibility for supporting employee welfare and wellbeing, as follows:

Personnel Services

The Council's Personnel Services team is based within Central Services and is responsible for a range of personnel activities in relation to employee welfare and wellbeing, including managing day to day sickness absence issues.

The main duties are to: -

- (a) Advise the Council, Cabinet, Joint Safety and Welfare Committee and other Bodies as required on all matters relating to sickness absence and employee welfare issues, including compliance with relevant legislation and good practice.
- (b) Ensure that sickness absence management procedures are in place across the Authority and monitor sickness absence levels regularly, providing advice to Managers and employees as necessary.
- (c) Work with Managers to agree return to work arrangements and other support required to facilitate attendance at work for employees who have been absent.
- (d) Develop welfare services, wellbeing and mental health related programmes for all members of staff, ensuring that external support is available as appropriate.**
- (e) Ensure the provision of training to support Managers to undertake their roles and responsibilities with regards to health & safety, managing sickness absence and employee wellbeing effectively

2. The Role of Personnel Services

The Council's Personnel Services team employs experienced and professionally qualified Officers with the appropriate skills, knowledge and expertise to support all employment related matters for the Council in accordance with legislation and best practice, including all the employee related issues outlined in the health, safety and welfare policy (as outlined above).

The duties undertaken by Personnel Services include developing, implementing, monitoring and supporting employees and their line managers with sickness absence issues ranging from occasional days of absence through to those employees with the most serious of prognosis, and unfortunately occasional situations where a death occurs in service. Where appropriate, a range of other approaches/support can be used to prevent employees becoming unwell.

Undertaking these duties often involves the handling of highly sensitive personal and complex medical information relating to employees and using this information to support both the individual concerned and their line management to facilitate an appropriate resolution to the situation.

It should be noted that it is not in the remit of Personnel Services to provide services to Elected Members. It would not be appropriate for the remit of the team to be expanded to provide these services, given the nature of the personal information required and the lack of a management structure to work within.

3 Current Welfare Services, Wellbeing and Mental Health Programmes For Employees

A wide range of welfare services, wellbeing and mental health programmes are currently available to support Council employees, as summarised below. These services may be accessed:

- as part of sickness absence management procedures, when managing an ongoing case of absence from work or to support return to work arrangements
- as initiatives for individual employees with the aim of preventing absence from work or
- as initiatives which are widely communicated/promoted to all employees

3.1 An “Employee Wellbeing Hub” has been developed which is available to all employees and contains a range of information about mental health and resources. It includes links and information on a wide range of issues including:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emergency help for people in crisis - Five Ways to Wellbeing - Living with Depression - Living with Anxiety - Changing your negative thoughts - Winter Wellbeing - Walking for Health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Menopause - Clinical online webinars - Men’s Football - Mindful Walking - Bereavement - Happier January - Men’s Time to Talk - Men’s Health and Mental Health
---	--

3.2 We regularly signpost employees to the NHS Wellbeing Service. This is advantageous because clinical mental health assessments are carried out and we are then able to offer therapeutic intervention accordingly, following NICE (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) guidelines.

3.3 Where appropriate, employees are referred for external support such as counselling, psychotherapy, cognitive behavioural therapy or to Occupational Health Consultants

to seek assessment and occupational health advice for employees regarding health conditions including mental health conditions.

- 3.4 Training and advice has been provided to all Managers on managing stress at work for many years, including the requirement for managers to complete stress risk assessments as part of the annual appraisal process. A revised 'Managing Stress at Work Corporate Guidance Note' has recently been issued.
- 3.5 All line managers are trained in Mental Health First Aid (delivered by Norfolk and Waveney Mind and tailored to reference our procedures) as well as to incorporate the Shift (National Mental Health Development Unit) Line Managers' Resource.
- 3.6 The Mind 'Wellness Action Plan' tool is used to support employees, including those who may predominantly work from home.
- 3.7 Three employees have been trained in ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills) to provide support on this issue as/when required.
- 3.8 Information and support for individual employees is also available on a range of subjects dependent on their need, including:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sleep and sleep disorders / sleep hygiene - Assessment for Autistic Spectrum Condition - Exercise intensity / efficacy - Bereavement - Hidden disabilities / the Sunflower Scheme - Menopause - Cancer and cancer diagnoses - Pain and physiotherapy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Wellbeing Service - Happiness and the 5 Ways to Wellbeing - Time to Talk Day - RED January (Run Every Day) - Gardening for Health - Every Mind Matters and Wellness Action Plans - Seasonal Flu Vaccinations - Seasonal Flu / Covid
---	--

- 3.9 Bi-monthly Wellbeing events are held. To date these have included:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - International Men's Day - Wellness checks - Menopause Café - Knit and Natter - Home Workers Forum - Wellbeing Week – sessions ran on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Mental Health o Good Mood Food o Mindfulness o Exercise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Men's Prostate Health - Sleep - Happier January - International Women's Day - Individual Health and Wellness Checks - Menopause café - Stress and resilience workshops - Menofit - Aquazumba - Park Run meet up
--	--

- 3.10 Guidance is available to individual employees dealing with / managing / accessing support for (as an example):

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial issues / benefits advice - People in crisis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stress / mental health and Wellness Action Plans (team and individual)
--	--

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bereavement - Cognitive Behavioural Therapy / CBT techniques - Panic attacks and Anxiety Disorders - Depression and Low Mood - Assessment of depression and anxiety via PHQ9 / GAD7 - Eating Disorders - Peer Support - Living with pain - Suicidal ideation - Supporting individuals experiencing suicidal ideation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Migraines - Disability Issues including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Continence o Accessibility o Reasonable adjustments and support at work o High Impact Health Conditions o Equipment - Menopause and Perimenopause - Domestic Breakdown - Bipolar Disorder - Trauma / PTSD
---	--

- 3.11 Personnel partners with the Norfolk and Suffolk Foundation Trust Wellbeing Service (IAPT) to access events, information for employees (monthly summaries of these are posted on notice boards in all locations).
- 3.12 Pre-covid, Personnel ran a Wellbeing Week during which NHS Cognitive Behavioural Therapists and NHS Psychological Wellbeing Practitioners delivered in-person group briefings about ways to look after wellbeing. A Sleep-Hygiene clinic was also arranged at their own premises in King's Lynn.

4 New developments for 2023

The range of welfare and wellbeing support offered to employees is continuously being developed, with the following initiatives already planned for 2023:

- 4.1 On the 1st March 2023 the Council launched a TRiM (Trauma Risk Management) procedure and network of TRiM Managers and Practitioners to enable employees who are exposed to potentially traumatising workplace events to access NICE-recommended in-house support and signposting to external resources.
- 4.2 Later in 2023 revised guidance for employees on Dealing with Unacceptable Customer behaviour will be issued.
- 4.3 A new Domestic Abuse procedure for employees is in the final stages of development and will be rolled out shortly, supported by training for managers and employees.
- 4.4 Further developments to the Wellbeing Hub are planned.

5 The Menopause

As Members can see from the range of information supplied above, the Council is already providing employees with a range of information relating to the menopause:

- Information is published on the Wellbeing Hub which is available to all employees

- Articles have been published in Internal Affairs (the staff magazine) and the weekly staff updated email
- An initial Menopause Café' was held in 2019, run jointly with Unison. This was repeated in October 2022 and a third event is scheduled for March 2023
- Line manager wellbeing training has included coverage of how to support employees with the menopause
- There is ongoing advice/support to employees on an individual basis and to their managers
- Menopause awareness day was supported in October 2022 with various activities undertaken

The menopause workplace pledge is organised by the Wellbeing of Women charity. In signing the pledge employers commit to:

- recognising that the menopause can be an issue in the workplace and women need support
- talking openly, positively and respectfully about the menopause
- actively supporting and informing employees about the menopause

6 Conclusions

The Council is already meeting all the requirements of the pledge, so little more could be achieved by signing up to it. Furthermore, specifically singling out one particular issue could diminish the profile of the wider wellbeing support work being undertaken, and impact on the perception of those employees suffering from other health related matters such as cancer, mental health issues or other serious health conditions.

A continued approach to offering a broad range of support, responsive to the needs of employees without indicating that any one issue is more significant to others is the recommended way forward.