



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2018/19

**HEALTH & WELLBEING SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

19th March 2019

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF
HUMAN RESOURCES**

TACKLING MENTAL HEALTH

Author: Peter Cushion, Head of Employee Relations
01443444503

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an overview of the work carried out by the Human Resources Department in addressing the issue of mental health in the Council.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members acknowledge the information contained in the report.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council and indeed most organisations are striving towards a culture of well-being for its workforce, which would encompass a raft of different initiatives, one of which being mental health.
- 3.2 Over the last 15 years there has been an increase in the awareness, acceptance and action taken in addressing mental health, including in the workplace. For many employers, protecting, supporting and enhancing the mental health and well-being of employees is the primary motivation for undertaking action.
- 3.3 In addition, there are economic costs related to workplace mental health, covering absenteeism, presenteeism and the wider costs of staff turnover and recruitment.

- 3.4 Statistically in Rhondda Cynon Taf Council, the figure attributed to mental health absence is around 30%, however in reality the figure is likely to be much higher.
- 3.5 The mental health organisation MIND report that the overall number of people with mental health problems has not changed significantly in recent years, but worries about things like money, jobs and benefits can make it harder for people to cope.
- 3.6 It appears that how people cope with mental health problems is getting worse, as the number of people who self harm or have suicidal thoughts is increasing.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES INTERVENTIONS

- 4.1 The Occupational Health and Wellbeing Unit supports the strategic wellbeing and attendance management approaches for the Council. Within this, the function provides mental health services to help maintain attendance at work and encourage a speedier return, potentially via reasonable adjustments and/or rehabilitative return to work.
- 4.2 Between 1st January 2018 to 1st January 2019, 2300 mental health appointments were provided, and these include counselling services, managing my life, etc.
- 4.3 Some of these interventions have been in place for a number of years, and include;
- Wellbeing included in all development programmes (Transform, Mercury, Aspire);
 - Wellbeing included in the induction process and performance reviews;
 - In house counselling service, which provides a range of interventions, such as cognitive behavioural therapy, which is a talking therapy that helps an individual manage their problems by changing the way they think and behave;
 - Referrals to other organisations / interventions for support, such as Valleys Steps;
 - Trauma support in situations where there has been a death, traumatic death or murder of a child to provide support for school staff;
 - Consultative supervision for high emotional and demanding jobs, such as social care, which is a proactive support to prevent future mental health illness;

- Urgent response to staff who feel suicidal and ensure they receive the correct support;
 - Awareness of mental health issues raised through manager briefings;
 - Time to change sessions held throughout the Council, which is the first national campaign to end the stigma and discrimination faced by people with mental health issues. These sessions have taken place in areas such as offices, depots and residential homes;
 - Managing my life support programme, which is designed to be informative and provide practical tools and techniques that can assist with different aspects of an employee's life e.g. managing stress, improve resilience and self-esteem;
 - Human Resources review sickness cases in up to 300 case reviews per month, to ensure appropriate support is in place, and that we are effectively managing the cases.
- 4.4 Human Resources have also been working with the relevant trade unions to secure additional funding (WULF) to provide Mental Health Awareness training. The funding secured in 2018/19 was subsequently match funded by the Council, which demonstrates its commitment to support this issue.
- 4.5 Sixteen mental health awareness training courses were subsequently held across the Council, with 320 managers / line managers attending. The feedback from this training has been positive, and we will continue to work with the trade unions to drive this initiative forward.
- 4.6 A payslip insert was provided to all staff to raise awareness of World Mental Health Day on 10th October 2018, and this highlighted the importance of everyone being able to talk about mental health, and reduce the stigma associated with it.
- 4.7 A staff health and wellbeing event took place on January 23rd 2019 at Abercynon Sports Centre. The event included service areas within the Council, such as the Occupational Health Unit, Leisure for Life, Catering and the Library service, together with external organisations such as Valleys Steps, Samaritans, Disability and Carers Network and Mind.
- 4.8 Amongst other initiatives present, Mindfulness and Stress Control taster sessions were run throughout the day, together with opportunities for staff to pick up a free 7 day RCT Leisure pass, hints and tips regarding cost effective healthy eating options, assistance available to carers, blood pressure checks

and the ability to speak to a representative from the external mental health organisations.

5. FUTURE

- 5.1 A well-being working group has been established to build on the work already undertaken, to look at further initiatives and maintain the drive to reduce the stigma and normalise mental health issues within the Council.
- 5.2 In conjunction with IT, we will look to develop the Council's intranet site to advertise organisations, both internal and external, that may be of assistance to employees when needed.
- 5.3 In addition to this, we will look to develop communication of these organisations to the 'harder to reach' workforce that don't have access to the intranet during work time.
- 5.4 An action plan will be developed to provide a structured approach to addressing this issue within the Council, and build on the good work that is already being undertaken.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no equality and diversity implications as a result of the recommendations set out in the report

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 There are no consultation implications as a result of the recommendations set out in the report.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 8.1 There are no financial implications as a result of the recommendations set out in the report.