

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Slough Wellbeing Board

DATE: **31st May 2022**

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WARD(S): ALL

PART I **FOR COMMENT AND CONSIDERATION**

FUTURE PLANS: PRIORITY FOUR, WORKPLACE HEALTH

1. **Purpose of Report**

This report has been submitted to provide the Slough Wellbeing Board our current position and proposals for next steps on Workplace Health.

2. **Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action**

- (a) The Committee is requested to note the report*
- (b) To consider and agree the proposals put forward*

3. **Background**

Workplace Health is Sloughs' Priority Four within the 2020-25 Wellbeing Strategy.

There is strong evidence that supporting health and wellbeing of colleagues can achieve a range of positive outcomes such as: enhanced performance, improved staff retention, lower levels of sickness absence, presenteesim and organisational success through more productive and motivated staff.

It is useful to establish what we mean by Workplace Health and its relationship to individual wellbeing as it can be unique to each person. The Office for National Statistics describes it as: Wellbeing, put simply, is about 'how we are doing' as individuals, communities and as a nation and how sustainable this is for the future.

Personal wellbeing is a particularly important dimension which we define as how satisfied we are with our lives, our sense that what we do in life is worthwhile, our day to day emotional experiences (happiness and anxiety) and our wider mental wellbeing. ¹

Sickness and ill health cost employers substantial amounts of money. The CIPD (2019) Health and Wellbeing at Work survey estimate the cost of sickness absence equates to £835 per employee in the public sector. ²

As employers we know we have a responsibility to protect and support the health and wellbeing of our staff. We know that organisations that work with staff to develop approaches that invest in the health and wellbeing of their staff see higher rates of retention, reduced sickness absence and increased productivity. ³ Therefore, a proactive approach to health and wellbeing in the

¹ ONS (2016)

² CIPD (2019) Health & Wellbeing at Work

³ PHE (2017)

workplace is the right thing to do. As a community it is beneficial for employees, our business and wider society.

Our starting point is to identify where our top health risks are and how our data can give us a good insight into where we should target our strategy. We must be holistic in our approach and ensure that financial wellbeing receives adequate attention and evaluate and improve wellbeing initiatives.

ONS national labour market data⁴ states that:

- Average Sickness absence rates (2.2%) have increased and are at their highest for 11 years.
- Average Number of total days lost through sickness absence (149.3 millions) are at their the highest since 2009
- Number of days lost per employer (4.6 days) are at their highest since 2010
- Average number of days lost per local government employee (6.9 days) is the highest since 2009

The Southeast has the highest number of days lost to sickness (18.8m) within England
And what does this mean to Slough Borough Council (based on modelling):

Days lost to sickness per employee	6.9 days
Average Salary in Slough Borough Council	£30,000.00 (guesstimate, not verified)
Average cost of sickness per employee	£796.15
Total average cost of sickness	£955k (796.15 x 1200 employees)

Nationally, the top reasons for sickness, taking out “other” are minor illnesses and musculoskeletal problems:

Reason given for sickness (Public sector)	2021 (%age of days lost)
Minor illnesses	16.5
Musculoskeletal problems	15.6
Other *	27.8
Mental health conditions **	12.0
Gastrointestinal problems	5.2
Eye/ear/nose/mouth/dental problems	3.0
Headaches and migraines	2.6
Respiratory conditions	6.7
Genito-urinary problems	2.2
Heart, blood pressure, circulation problems	3.5
Prefers not to give details	4.8
Total	100.0

*From April 2020 interviewers were advised to code any mention of Coronavirus as other albeit they may also

**This includes stress, depression, anxiety and serious mental health

⁴ ONS (2021)

The CIPD (2022) report suggests that 67% of organisations include COVID-19 among their top three causes of short-term absence and just over a quarter (265) report long COVID among their top causes of long term illness⁵

The cost of ill health and absence from work, according to the 'Thriving at Work' the Stevenson/Farmer review mental health and employers (2017), suggests £1485 per employee. **⁶This would mean that on estimation it could be costing Slough Borough Council around; £1,782 m** . This figure is made up of absence costs, presenteesim costs, recruitment and turnover costs.

Understanding the needs of our workforce population, identifying our desired health and wellbeing outcomes and developing robust health interventions is the main focus of the proposals being put forward. In terms of our return on investment, recent research has indicated that for every £1 spent there is around a £9.98 return. ⁷

From experience and extensive research, the key ingredients of a successful workplace wellbeing programme requires the following:

- ✓ Senior buy in and clear messaging from organisational leaders
- ✓ A Workplace Wellbeing Strategic Committee - Strategic direction
- ✓ A Workplace Wellbeing Lead
- ✓ Data driven / evidence based
- ✓ Making wellness activities convenient and accessible to all employees
- ✓ Resources to deliver the initiatives
- ✓ A communication plan
- ✓ Evaluation and measurement of impact of wellbeing programmes

This proposal will put forward promising wellbeing initiatives and practices for health and wellbeing at work including: the strategy and holistic approach to get started, mental health, financial wellbeing initiatives and ideas that cover a broad range of wellbeing topics.

The approach is to develop a holistic wellbeing programme that includes: prevention and interventions initiatives, together with addressing some of the top health risks as below.

1.1. **Mental Health**

Approximately 1 in 4 people in the UK will experience a mental health problem each year. ⁸

In England, 1 in 6 people report experiencing a common mental health problem (such as anxiety and depression) in any given week.

By 2030, it is estimated that there will be approximately two million more adults in the UK with mental health problems than there were in 2013.

The interventions and initiatives suggested below are ideas of what we could offer as part of a workplace wellbeing programme.

⁵ CIPD (2022)

⁶ 'Thriving at Work' the Stevenson/Farmer review mental health and employers (2017)

⁷ 'Thriving at Work' the Stevenson/Farmer review mental health and employers (2017)

⁸ McManus, S., Meltzer, H., Brugha, T. S., Bebbington, P. E., & Jenkins, R. (2009). [Adult psychiatric morbidity in England, 2007: results of a household survey](#). The NHS Information Centre for health and social care.

- 1.1.1 To roll out Mental Health First Aid training. ⁹
- 1.1.2 To roll out Mental Health awareness training to all staff.
- 1.1.3 To promote the NHS approved Be Mindful online course to all staff. A digital training programme that guides users through all the elements of mindfulness-based cognitive therapy and mindfulness-based stress reduction. ¹⁰
- 1.1.4 To promote PHE Psychological First Aid Training
- 1.1.5 To promote and increase take-up of our employee assistance programme.
- 1.1.6 To promote the New every Mind Matters Campaign¹¹
- 1.1.7 Explore the use of the HSE Talking Toolkits for tackling work-related stress¹²
- 1.1.8 To develop, implement and communicate a mental health at work plan in line with the “Thriving at Work” review, mental health and employers¹³

2.1 Musculoskeletal Health (MSK)

MSK conditions include a range of ailments that cover injury, damage or disorder of the joints or other issues in the upper/lower limbs or the back. MSK-related conditions are associated with; sedentary positions, continual repetition of movement, concentrated force of specific areas of the body and a pace of work that does not allow employees sufficient recovery time. ¹⁴

With this in mind the following are suggestions of what could be offered as part of a workplace wellbeing programme.

- 2.1.1 To develop a MSK toolkit for the organisation using the BITC MSK toolkit template.
- 2.1.2 To adopt the ESCAPE-pain initiative, a rehabilitation programme that includes both an education component to learn about the causes of chronic pain and coping strategies as well as tailored exercise programme¹⁵
- 2.1.3 To promote day 1 intervention for MSK related sickness absence for assessment by occupational health and/or physiotherapy.

3.1 Financial Wellbeing

Integral to any workplace wellbeing programme is an understanding of the importance of how financial concerns can affect employee mental and physical health. Financial wellbeing not only affects individual workers, but it also impacts on business performance.

According to research commissioned by the CIPD, found that, 1 in 4 employees say that financial concerns have affected their ability to do their job. The effects of these

⁹ MHFA England

¹⁰ Bemindful.co.uk

¹¹ PHE Jan 2021

¹² HSE (2018) Go Home Healthy – Talking Toolkits – Preventing work-related stress

¹³ Thriving at Work’ the Stevenson/Farmer review mental health and employers. (2017)

¹⁴ HSE (2018)

¹⁵ www.scape-pain.org

concerns include, lost sleep, finding it hard to concentrate at work, spend working time dealing with money worries. ¹⁶

This is a challenging area of wellbeing driven by rising living costs and Slough section 114 status. There is evidence that poor employee financial wellbeing costs an organisation in terms of absenteeism, mental health, stress levels, job performance, decision making and focus

The initiatives suggested below are ideas of what we could offer as part of a workplace wellbeing programme

3.1.1 Promote the services of Money Advisor Network

3.1.2 Introduce Neyber, a financial Employee Benefits wellbeing platform that includes: financial education, podcasts & workshops

4.1 Menopause

51 is the average age women reach Menopause, with 1 in 4 women experiencing serious symptoms. 8 out of 10 women of menopausal age are in work and the majority are unwilling to discuss menopause related health problems to their line manager. Symptoms can include; sleeplessness, memory loss, headaches, depression and anxiety. ¹⁷

With this in mind the following are suggestions of what could be offered as part of our workplace wellbeing programme.

4.1.1 review existing policies related to wellbeing and develop a specific policy around women's Health and the Menopause

4.1.2 Deliver Menopause seminars for staff and line managers

4.1.3 Carry out an assessment of "How Menopause friendly" is our organisation

5.1 Physical Activity

Becoming more active is good for our mental health and physical health and reduces our risk of developing a number of health conditions. One in 3 adults in England live with a long-term condition and they are twice as likely to be the amongst the least physically active¹⁸Slough has significantly lower levels of physical activity (56%) compared to our neighbours (69.5%) and lower levels of overweight & obesity (58.7%) compared to our neighbours (61.6%)¹⁹

The NHS guidelines on physical activity state that adults should aim to be active daily. Over a week, activity should add up to at least 150 minutes (2½ hours) of moderate intensity activity in bouts of 10 minutes or more – one way to approach this is to do 30 minutes on a least 5 days a week. All adults should minimise the amount of time being sedentary (sitting) for extended periods.

¹⁶ CIPD (2019) Health and Wellbeing at Work

¹⁷ The British Menopause Society

¹⁸ PHE (2020) Health matters: physical activity-prevention and management of long-term conditions

¹⁹ PHE Fingertips Local Authority Health Profile 2019

With this in mind the following are suggestions of what could be offered as part of our workplace wellbeing programme.

- 5.1.1 Review of current provision of opportunities for staff to take part in physical activity clubs/event. In particular a focus on what's available in the workday in terms of convenience and accessibility.
- 5.1.2 Develop a workplace challenge event where employees/teams compete, using an activity log and face to face activities. Slough Games

6.1 Healthy Eating

Individuals consume a third of their calorie intake at work, highlighting the potential for businesses to have a significantly positive impact on the eating habits of their employees. Only 27% of adults (19-64) and 35% of those aged over 65 years ate recommended five or more portions of fruit and vegetables a day in 2019²⁰

Public Health England²¹ has put together guidance for employees to support and encourage healthier eating in the workplace which includes:

- 6.1.1 Put in place a healthy eating policy/statement to maximise opportunities for staff to make healthier choices
- 6.1.2 Encourage staff to take regular breaks during the working day so they have opportunities to eat well.
- 6.1.3 Choose healthy catering services and venues when considering staff away days and business lunches.

7.1 Men's Health

Men account for three-quarters of premature deaths from heart disease, are twice as likely to die from drug or alcohol abuse and three times more likely to die from suicide.

But perhaps the most damaging of all-male habits is men's reluctance to seek help. Working-age men are far less likely to visit a GP than women when they become ill and they are less likely to ask for help with their mental health.

- 7.1.1 Nominate a male "champion" at work to build awareness of men's health issues and encourage uptake of support
- 7.1.2 Encourage senior male employees to share their experiences of accessing support for health issues – particularly in regards to mental health.
- 7.1.3 Use relevant awareness days (including Movember, Men's Health week and International Men's Day) to highlight men's health issues internally.
- 7.1.4 Update existing Equality and Diversity policies to ensure they make adequate provision for men's health.
- 7.1.5 Encourage male employees to attend medical appointments, both virtually and in-person, by offering flexibility for thee to take place within work hours.

²⁰ BDA Association of UK Dietitians (2019)

²¹ www.wellbeingcharter.org.uk/media/Healthy%20Eating%20Topic%20Guide.pdf

The evidence is resounding that a workplace wellbeing programme is good for our people and good for business. There is a need to make a difference to the lives of the people who work in our business and our community by promoting overall wellness support.

As Slough enters a significant period of change through the Section 114 recovery plan it is paramount that staff understand what this means to them and how this will affect their day-to-day life and work.

A robust health and wellbeing at work programme should be a key component of the cooperate recovery plan in building engagement and active participation of staff in shaping and creating a resilient workforce. The current staff benefits and reward and recognition initiatives should be reviewed and strengthened.

As a result of this staff will recognise that senior leaders value their contribution through the development of the workforce wellbeing programme.

5a. **Slough Wellbeing Strategy Priorities** – (Compulsory Section)

Workplace Health is our fourth priority within the Slough Wellbeing Strategy.

Priorities:

1. *Starting Well*
2. *Integration (relating to Health & Social Care)*
3. *Strong, healthy and attractive neighbourhoods*
4. *Workplace health*

5b. **Five Year Plan Outcomes** (Compulsory Section)

Explain which of the Five Year Plan's outcomes the proposal or action will help to deliver. The outcomes are:

Explain which of the Five Year Plan's outcomes the proposal or action will help to deliver. The outcomes are:

- *Outcome 2: Our people will be healthier and manage their own care needs– through having a robust Director led Workforce Health strategy and action plan*
- *Outcome 5: Slough will attract, retain and grow businesses and investment to provide opportunities for our residents - through the Council being an employer of choice and who places Workplace Health as a corporate priority*

6. **Other Implications**

Financial Implications:

In order to deliver effective and robust workplace wellbeing programme the most essential resource will be the people delivering and driving the programme. This is best delivered under the co-leadership of HR and Public Health with engagement of various stakeholders including our business.

There needs to be a dedicated programme manager resources to drive the agenda forward. This will be supported through COVID recovery plan for next six months but will need resources identified in the future.

Staffing	Cost including on cost with pension	Notes
HR Consultant backfill	£30,000 (approx.)	Backfill for current post
Project Manager to be hosted by PH	£45,000 (approx.)	New post

Estimated Staff Costs: £75,000 (approx.)

Initiative	Estimated Costs	Notes
MECC Training	Free – e-lfh.org.uk	Made available to all staff
Mental Health First Aid Training	£10,000	The proposal is to train 50 managers in the first cohort over the first year
Mental Health Awareness ½ day course	£2500	To run a ½ day lite course every other month at a cost of
MH First Aid training for those caring for working with children PHE launches new Psychological First Aid training - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)	Free	Promote to all staff especially those who are parents plus those working with children and YP
Add Home :: Keeping Well (keepingwellnwl.nhs.uk) to SBC Public Health Webpage	Free	Promote to all staff
Health Topic Seminars i.e. Menopause, Healthy Heart, Men's health	£2000 (excluding those provided by Medigold)	Investigating what's included within the Medigold contract
Virtual Exercise Programme Active Slough Active Berkshire	Free – Couch to Fitness	Promote to all staff Promote Active Slough and Active Berkshire to all staff
Slough Staff Awards	Develop local sponsorship	

Estimated Initiatives costs: £14,500

(a) Risk Management

	Risks/Threats/ Opportunities	Current Controls	Using the Risk Management Matrix Score the risk	Future Controls
Financial Restraints inhibit the funding wellbeing programme	Financial insecurity of the council	Understanding the Workplace ill-health costs to the council	18 (High)	Funded from PH ringfenced grant

(b) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

None identified

(c) Equalities Impact Assessment

The Workforce Health Strategy and action plan process will augment and strengthen the SBC Equality duty through a refreshed needs assessment of pharmaceutical service provision in the area and the ability it affords to understand current population needs – including the needs of Slough residents with protected characteristics as set out in the Equality Act.

7. **Supporting Information**

Nil

8. **Comments of Other Committees**

NA

9. **Conclusion**

Workplace Health is Sloughs' Priority Four within the 2020-25 Wellbeing Strategy.

There is strong evidence that supporting health and wellbeing of colleagues can achieve a range of positive outcomes such as: enhanced performance, improved staff retention, lower levels of sickness absence, presenteesim and organisational success through more productive and motivated staff.

Through this paper Slough Wellbeing Board is requested to consider and agree the future proposal for investment and initiatives in Workplace Wellbeing programme.

10. **Background Papers**

None