

# Finance and Resources Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 7 March 2019

## Employee Wellbeing

Item number	7.12
Executive/routine	
Wards	
Council Commitments	

### 1. Recommendations

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- 1.1 Agree and implement, in conjunction with the relevant service areas, targeted mental and physical health interventions where high levels of absence have been identified.
- 1.2 To promote and continue to develop good practice and policies aligned to the wellbeing agenda, specifically performance management and sickness absence
- 1.3 To review the stress management, change management and recruitment policies to ensure HR strategy is fully integrated in supporting the wellbeing of our colleagues.
- 1.4 To consistently support and lead conversations with line managers around wellbeing initiatives, e.g. rolling agenda item at SMTs, cascade, training and informal opportunities.

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## Employee Wellbeing

### 2. Executive Summary

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The health and wellbeing of our workforce continues to remain a focus with absence costing circa £23m per annum and unquantifiable costs associated with morale and backfill. This paper outlines an integrated strategy, developed through discussion with elected members, trade unions, employees, line managers and HR to support a holistic approach to employee wellbeing.

The key areas include developing greater employee choice around financial wellbeing, mental health awareness for line managers and physical exercise classes targeted at those with physically demanding roles. In addition, the review and embedding of the policies to support the wellbeing agenda will be undertaken, including the Sickness Absence, Change Management, Stress Management and Recruitment policies to ensure our colleagues are supported at each stage where wellbeing is a key consideration. Finally, through employee engagement, a series of wellbeing campaigns to raise awareness of the importance of looking after ourselves, e.g. smoking cessation, mental health awareness, healthy eating, and physical exercise.

By supporting our employees to improve their wellbeing we hope to see an improvement in the health of our employees, engagement and retention rates and ultimately a reduction in sickness absence levels.

### 3. Background

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- 3.1 Whilst much has been done to address the wellbeing of our employees, this is not sufficiently visible and explicit, thus not having the desired impact.
- 3.2 Whilst initiatives, already in place, are ongoing a series of focus groups were arranged to review and build on our wellbeing proposals outlined in this paper.
- 3.3 A greater focus is required on joined up initiatives with an open dialogue about the health and wellbeing of our colleagues.
- 3.4 While the rolling absence rate reduced for the fifth month in a row in November 2018 to 5.37% this is still higher than the organisation target of 4%.

- 3.5 The two primary reasons for long term absence is mental health and musculoskeletal, hence the continuous development of a more preventative approach and the need to break down the stigma often associated with mental health.

## 4. Main report

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- 4.1 Focus groups have been held including elected members, trade unions, employees, line managers and HR to collectively discuss, develop and agree a wellbeing offering.
- 4.2 Taking a holistic and preventative view of wellbeing allows us to consider the wide variety of factors which influence wellbeing including finances, mental and physical health, resilience, performance management, job fit and line manager support.
- 4.3 As such, the focus group generated a wellbeing approach to address and support these areas. Please see appendix 1 for an overview of the organisation wide initiatives.
- 4.4 Further detail of the wellbeing offering, initiatives and actions are as follows;
- 4.5 Financial wellbeing
- a. Continue to engage with and promote the services of Capital Credit Union.
  - b. Commence a procurement exercise to identify additional financial service providers to increase the choice of financial wellbeing offered to employees. Based on evidence from other local authorities and taking account of our internal procurement process we estimate this will take between 9 to 12 months.
- 4.6 Mental Health
- a. Mental health awareness training to be developed and initially piloted with managers in high areas of stress related.
  - b. In consultation with Trade Unions, finalise the review of our Stress Management Policy in line with our new approach to simplification and with a greater focus on practical supportive action plans. This includes a move from our current 3 risk assessments, focused only on HSE compliance, to a more forward thinking holistic wellbeing assessment.
  - c. Review of the recruitment and selection policy and practice to ensure more comprehensive assessment to help mitigate the negative impact of 'poor job fit' on mental health.
- 4.7 Physical wellbeing
- a. Explore and implement support to stop smoking through ASH/NHS Scotland
  - b. Greater promotion of physical exercise, e.g. Bike to Work scheme, gym discounts, Edinburgh Leisure, and encouraging employees to develop their own team based activities.
  - c. Piloting physio based exercise classes to support those with physically demanding roles to proactively prevent absence due to musculoskeletal ill health

- 4.8 Organisation Wide Promotion of Wellbeing
- a. Further promotion and education of the Employee Assistance programme and Occupational Health services.
  - b. Supporting change through encouraging personal resilience and supporting managers to lead change, delivered through a new Leadership Development programme and the review of our proposed Change Management Policy.
  - c. Promotion of an annual calendar of core national awareness events, specifically around mental health awareness, smoking cessation, healthy eating, and cancer awareness. Equally managers and teams can choose what they would like to promote and we can spotlight teams through our newsbeat and communication channels.
  - d. Embedding of the new Sickness Absence policy and review supporting guidance, including a newly developed wellbeing workshops for managers.
  - e. Increase awareness of reasonable adjustments and medical redeployment options.
  - f. Explore the option of an external absence call line for those who have difficulty in contacting their line manager due to shift patterns and service delivery.
- 4.9 Communication and engagement around wellbeing will be further increased, e.g. roadshows, induction, standing agenda item at team meetings and exploration of a wellbeing platform.

## **5. Next Steps**

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- 5.1 Please see Appendix 2 for the wellbeing programme timeline.

## **6. Financial impact**

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- 6.1 Initial targeted pilots of Mental Health Awareness for line managers and Physio exercise classes for targeted pilot with manual workers is estimated to cost £20,000 which is set aside in the Learning and Development budget 2018/19. If this is successful, a wider role out will be costed and funding approval sought.
- 6.2 The cost estimate of sickness absence is currently £23 million. By moving to a more preventative and holistic view of wellbeing, once this is embedded, it is predicted this would reduce both short and long-term sickness absence and such the cost incurred by this.

## **7. Stakeholder/Community Impact**

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- 7.1 Elected members, trade unions, employees, line managers and HR have been engaged in the development of the proposals outlined in this paper.

## **8. Background reading/external references**

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8.1 N/A

## **9. Appendices**

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Appendix 1 - An overview of the organisational wide wellbeing offering

Appendix 2 – The wellbeing programme timeline

## Appendix 1- Organisational wide wellbeing initiatives

### FINANCIAL

- Credit Union
- Additional finance service

### MENTAL HEALTH

- MH Awareness training
- Stress Management Policy
- Resourcing strategy

### PHYSICAL HEALTH

- Stop smoking support
- Bike to work scheme
- Physio Classes

Promotion of Employee Assistance and Occupational Health

Change – 'Leading change' & 'Managing Personal Resilience' workshops, change management policy update

National awareness, e.g. cancer, no smoking day, bike to work, mental health

Embedding of our new Sickness Absence Policy & managing absence online learning & workshops

Promotion of Edinburgh Leisure

Reasonable adjustments & medical redeployment – how we manage these across our organisation

Potential of external absence reporting call line

# 2019- Wellbeing Programme

