

12. WELL BEING AT WORK POLICY/TR

Purpose of the report

To propose a new policy which outlines the Authority's intent and commitment to promotion of health and psychological wellbeing in the workplace.

Key issues

- Well Being at work is a theme in the Employee Engagement Action Plan with Jane Chapman as the Senior Management Team advocate.
- A Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) survey showed almost half (49%) of staff noticed an increase in stress at work as a result of economic downturn.
- Well Being at work survey held in October 2014 using the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) toolkit has highlighted 3 areas where the Authority should aspire to do better: Demand, Management Support, and Change.
- Given the high profile with staff on work in this theme, it is timely to outline the Authority's intent and commitment to Well Being through the introduction of a policy and guidance.

1.

Recommendations

2. 1. To approve the Well Being at Work Policy

How does this contribute to our policies and legal obligations?

3. The Authority has a legal duty of care to employees to ensure health at work, as set out in the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

Corporate Objective 11 – Be a well-run public body with proportionate and effective ways of working, delivering excellent customer service and enabling others to do so.

Background

4. 'Stress Management' was the original title for theme 8 of the Employee Engagement Action Plan, now re-named Well Being at Work. The change in title is a result of discussions at one of the focus groups where it was felt that 'stress' had a negative intonation, and it was agreed to positively re-frame the theme to focus on well being.

The theme gained its place on the Action Plan primarily from the information gathered as a result of introductory discussions held by the Head of HR with managers in July and August 2013. Managers were seeking guidance on how to support their staff suffering from excessive pressure in the workplace. The Authority had been through, and continues to face, a tough economic climate where many staff were under pressure to do more with less. A Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) survey in 2010 showed almost half (49%) of staff noticed an increase in stress at work as a result of the economic downturn. Whilst it is accepted a certain level of pressure at work helps to motivate people and can boost energy and productivity levels, when the pressure individuals are under exceeds their ability to cope, it becomes a negative rather than a positive force.

Recently there has been a groundswell of research and guidance produced (CIPD, HSE, ACAS) on health and well being in the workplace and why it matters. The research evidence links employee engagement and wellbeing, and the consequential impact on individual and organisational performance. Not only is there a legal

obligation to identify and prevent stress at work, but it also makes business sense; a 'happy' workforce is a productive one.

At the Local Joint Committee in June 2014, where the Employee Engagement Action Plan is scrutinised, members expressed concern on the observations that stress in the workplace was on the increase. It was recommended that a baseline assessment be undertaken to better understand the position and what action should be taken. In August, a Well Being at work survey was conducted using the Health and Safety Executive toolkit, to enable historical and organisational benchmarking. The results of the survey overall were positive but highlighted 3 areas where we should aspire to do better.

Demand – this includes issues such as workload, work patterns and the work environment

Management Support – this includes management and encouragement

Change – how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated

Two focus groups have been held in August and October to help inform and better understand the quantitative data. This work and quality information gathered from staff representing all directorates will influence the development of procedural guidance and supervisory briefings planned for later in the spring.

Proposals

5. To deliver briefings to supervisors on the Well Being at Work Policy and related processes
6. Through surveys and working groups continue to regularly monitor staff well being at work so that it is clearly defined and understood with a view to developing a strategy for improving organisational performance

Are there any corporate implications members should be concerned about?

7. **Financial:** There is no financial cost to introduce the policy and practice, it is likely to save on cost of sickness absence and reduced productivity due to excessive pressure or stress in the workplace
8. **Risk Management:** There is a risk to the Authority if the policy is not introduced and adopted. It is recognised by CIPD and HSE that stress in the workplace is a growing problem for individuals and employers, and there is a legal obligation to ensure a duty of care to employees.
9. **Sustainability:** The Well Being at Work Policy provides a framework for managers to support the sustainability of the workforce going forward, particularly resulting from periods of organisational change.
10. **Background papers** (not previously published)]

Appendices –

1. The Well Being at Work Policy]

Report Author, Job Title and Publication Date

Theresa Reid, Head of Human Resources, 28 January 2015