

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

10TH FEBRUARY 2025

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT – SHEENAGH REES

Matter for information

Wards Affected: All wards

Time to Change Wales Employer Pledge – Action Plan

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to update Members in relation to progress made on the Action Plan developed as part of the Time to Change Wales Employer Pledge, which the Council signed up to September 2019.

Executive Summary:

This report provides Members with an update in the relation to the actions which have been undertaken since the last update to this Committee in November 2023 to support the Council's commitment to the Time to Change Wales Employer Pledge.

Background:

The Time to Change Wales Employer Pledge

The Time to Change Wales Campaign's Employer Pledge provides a framework for employers to work within to support employees with their mental health. The Campaign provides support to employers including training and access to a range of resources. There are no financial costs to the scheme.

Following a report to Personnel Committee in May 2019, the Pledge was signed at Staff Council in September 2019.

Action Plan

The Action Plan draws on the internal resources we already have in place as well as resources that will be made available by Time to Change Wales. Originally Time to Change Wales trained a pool of 'Employee Champions' who are instrumental in disseminating messages and information about mental health across the Council. However, more recently, we have recruited more Employee Champions and they have attended the Mental Health First Aid Level 1 training course and are supported by the Future of Work Team. The network is growing; currently we have 33 Employee Champions across the Council.

A copy of the Action Plan is provided in Appendix 1. Members will note that excellent progress has been made in delivering the original Action Plan, however we continue to add to this to ensure our support remains fit for purpose and relevant.

Provided below are some of the key actions that have been delivered since the last update. We will continue to concentrate on initiatives to support the wellbeing of our workforce.

Key actions:-

Mental Health Champions

- Our Mental Health Champions have supported employees by providing someone to talk to and signposting them to seek further support, such as contacting their GP or accessing the Employee Assistance Programme for counselling. This is a key part of our Action Plan.
- Champions attend free webinars covering topics such as suicide and financial wellbeing, coping with stress and anxiety, addiction awareness, and neurodiversity and mental health.
- Champions attended an in-person session focusing on the principles of the Pledge signed by the Council.
- Three Champions attended the Wales Mental Health and Wellbeing Forum in November 2024 to research various exhibitors who raise awareness of poor mental health.
- Five Champions introduced themselves on NPT Connect, and posters have been shared and placed in buildings across the Council.

Employee Assistance Programme

- We introduced our Employee Assistance Programme (VIVUP) in January 2024. In the year of its operation, more employees have accessed counselling support via the platform than in the 3 years prior to

implementation, via externally purchased counselling services and at a lower cost.

- Research from the Employee Assistance Professionals Association (EAPA) indicates that, on average, 5-10% of employees use EAP services annually. Over this initial 12 month period, our current engagement level has been 4.5%, and with numbers increasing over time as awareness of the platform also increases. Spikes in usage are noted when publicity / events highlight the platform – more work will be done this year to publicise the EAP.

Financial & Wellbeing Roadshows

- Four sessions were delivered and supported by Mental Health Champions to raise awareness of available support, including the Employee Assistance Programme and the Mental Health Network. Sessions were held on 24th June 2024, 15th July 2024, 17th October 2024, and 9th January 2025, with future dates being explored.
- Three sessions were delivered to promote relaxation with sound healing and meditation.

Communication

- Weekly wellbeing material shared across Viva Engage Channels, key theme dates promoted, with activities arranged by champions, such as a Tea and Talk day for World Mental Health Day on 10th October 2024, including an online quiz.
- Promoted sessions with MIND, covering topics such as emotional resilience, mental health and masculinity, breaking unhelpful thinking patterns, mental health and money and managing anxiety. .
- Delivered awareness raising sessions on mental health to teams across the Council, when requested.

Schools Wellbeing Group

- we have planned awareness-raising sessions for school staff and developed options for delivery which we will take forward in 2025

Promotion of Support Available to front-line employees

Mental Health workshops were held in the following workplaces, updating employees on the range of support available to them, including the Employee Assistance Programme.

- Primary schools
- Hillside Secure Centre
- Community Wellbeing Team (Homecare)
- Rhodes House
- Brynamlwg
- Trem Y Mor
- Building Control and Building Control Administration
- Streetcare services

Impact of the action plan:

Employees were asked questions relating to Mental Health in the 2024 Employee Survey:

- 66% think that the council's policies support employee mental health
- 69% know what mental health resources and services are available to them
- 63% think that their mental health is considered important within their service
- 70% feel able to discuss their mental health challenges with their manager

It will be interesting to see how this feedback may change in the 2025 survey following all the activity that has taken place since the survey was run.

Financial Impacts:

There are no financial implications associated with this report as all actions are being carried out from existing resources and budgets.

Integrated impact assessment:

There is no requirement to undertake an Integrated Impact Assessment as this report is for monitoring / information purposes.

Valleys Communities Impacts:

No implications

Workforce Impacts:

The intention behind the Time to Change Wales campaign and our action plan is to have a positive impact on the workforce by reducing the stigma around mental health and discrimination faced by people with mental health problems within the workplace. It aims to normalise conversations around mental health so that our employees feel supported.

Legal Impacts:

No implications.

Risk Management Impacts:

No implications.

Consultation:

There is no requirement under the Constitution for external consultation on this item.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that Members note the update in relation to Time to Change Wales Action Plan and receive a further update in 12 months.

FOR INFORMATION

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Time to Change Wales Action Plan

Officer contact

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