



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

Employee Financial Wellbeing Strategy 2023- 2025

Tackling the Cost of Living Crisis

1. Introduction

Neath Port Talbot Council aspires to be an organisation where every employee feels financially supported and rewarded fairly. However, with the increase in cost of living, some employees may be struggling to meet their needs due to financial hardship. Financial hardship can be experienced through means of struggling to pay your rent or buy household essentials for example. This often leaves people feeling insecure, uncertain and unable to make clear decisions about money. The stress money worries can cause often overwhelm people, affecting them emotionally within their personal lives and at work.

The Council, as an employer, understands that employee's pay needs to be improved, however, we are unable to enter into pay negotiations locally, as we are subject to national pay bargaining, therefore our salary scale is determined nationally. However, what we can do is implement this Strategy and Action Plan to ensure our employees are fully informed about financial matters that are important to them.

The key part of this strategy is the Action Plan which will encourage and support action within Neath Port Talbot Council. While every employee will have a different set of challenges, we hope that the Action Plan provides a basis for new solutions and real change. If we do not all rise to this challenge, we risk missing an opportunity to support our employees to build a brighter future in which they can thrive.

This Action Plan will aim to develop a co-ordinated and coherent strategic response to the increased risk of hardship faced by Neath Port Talbot Council employees due to the far-reaching economic and social implications that were already being experienced and in addition, the increased cost of living. The strategy sets out the long-term vision for our Council, working across the Council and with partners to improve the lives of all our employees and is centred on improving financial wellbeing.

2. Aims of the Strategy

To achieve a financially inclusive Council, where employees have access to a comprehensive range of appropriate financial and money advice services, as well as the knowledge, skills and confidence to maximise their own financial wellbeing.

To be a council that enables and empowers partners and stakeholders to work together to deliver a range of relevant and supportive financial inclusion services that meets the needs of all employees.

To offer a council-wide service and use key messages to promote awareness and improve access, signposting to existing and any new services.

To utilise matrix working across the council and with external partners to align to key strategies and policies.

3. How will the Strategy and Action Plan be supported?

The delivery of this Strategy and Action Plan will need to be a joint effort across all Directorates across the Council and should include our recognised trade unions, who will play an important role in not only offering assistance, but in signposting their members to the initiatives identified. Utilising the connections available to us to maximise opportunities for matrix working, ensuring that support is received by those that need it most, at the time they need, preventing escalation into crisis. The actions proposed within this Action Plan will strengthen the shared commitment our council has to the employees of Neath Port Talbot Council.

Communicating with our employees through surveys and focus groups will give confidence that employees are being heard and listened to as we do our very best to curb the impact of the cost of living crisis on their livelihoods.

We will take an outwards looking attitude to help unlock the diverse range of skills and knowledge already evident within our employees and building on the strengths that people have to help themselves.

We will also adopt a restorative approach to working with people, supporting them to tackle issues early and support them on their journey from reliance to resilience. Although initiated and ultimately accountable to the council, this Action Plan aims to be meaningfully owned by all those who engage, to truly drive it forward.

4. How will we know if we've made a difference?

Some of the ways in which we will see the impact of the strategy and evidence change include:

- Increase in internal promotions
- Reduction in our gender pay gap
- Increased uptake of the Cycle2Work / Shared AVCs /Low CO2/Hybrid/Electric Cars and other salary sacrifice schemes
- Increased discussion across the Council surrounding finances
- More targeted communications around financial wellbeing
- Uptake of initiatives introduced as part of this Strategy and Action Plan

The implementation of the Action Plan will not be quick or easy, but with vision, commitment and collaboration, we can all play a part in supporting Neath Port Talbot Council employees to be more in control of their finances.

We anticipate that those who can make change happen, will start to see they are part of a wider movement by supporting Neath Port Talbot Council to create and implement locally led solutions and build capacity for bigger change.

FINANCIAL WELLBEING STRATEGY 2023 – 2025 - ACTION PLAN

Category of Action	Working Towards	Action
Employment Security	Becoming a real living wage employer.	400 people out of approximately 6,500 employees don't earn the real living wage. These individuals are all on scale point 1, 2 or 3. Further research is due to be carried out in relation to this.
Terms and Conditions	Establishment of a Travel Working Group	<p>A working group has been established since May 2022 where discussions have taken place between council employees and the Trade Unions regarding what our current policy offers and what recommendations need to be considered:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of a community worker category (this category of worker will deduct the first five miles and last five miles of business travel each working day to reflect that they rarely attend their fixed centre. • Review our Travel and Subsistence Payments Policy • Introduction of a salary sacrifice car purchase scheme to improve the Council's green credentials and also allow all employees to have the option to purchase either an electric, hybrid or low CO2 emission car.
	Reviewing our Special Leave Scheme in line with best practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The review has been conducted and a report is due to be taken to CDG to discuss suggested recommendations.
Employer of Choice	Introducing an Employee Assistance Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A report recommending the introduction of an Employee Assistance Programme was taken to CDG in June 2022. Further research is being undertaken in relation to this and a report is being submitted to CDG.
	Carrying out an equal pay audit to ensure our pay and grading structure continues to be 'equality proofed'.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue to ensure that employees doing 'equal work' (work that equal pay law classes as the same, similar, equivalent or of equal value) are being fairly remunerated. ▪ Equal Pay Audit to commence following implementation of incremental progression at the end of April 2023.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to educate employees on our job evaluation scheme and ensure that it is utilised to assess the value of jobs in a fair, transparent and consistent way.
	Review the take-up of existing benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct an employee survey about existing benefit offering and any desired change. Establish the amount of employees utilising the Cycle2Work scheme/ discounted gym memberships / Shared salary sacrifice AVCs/Car Purchase Salary Sacrifice Scheme.
Reward and Recognition	Introduce a Staff Recognition Scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further research is being undertaken in relation to this.
	Enable employees to access an advance on their pay before pay day, including a financial wellbeing platform.	<p>Initial meetings have taken place with two companies who provide this service:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wagestream Salary Finance <p>Payroll and Information Governance colleagues are researching the best fit for the Council.</p>
	Expanding the concept of the reward package and total rewards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research to be undertaken into what rewards other local authorities are offering to their staff members. Research to be undertaken into the cost of providing discount at attractions and venues in the NPT area to support Wellbeing Objective 4 as well as financially supporting our employees.
Learning, Training and Development and Promotion	Review opportunities for staff to develop and progress in their careers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshops on succession planning were carried out throughout the latter half of 2022 with all accountable managers in order to help them understand which of their posts are business critical and how to create a plan for staff members to develop and progress within their teams. Proposals to implement a Leadership and Management Programme are being considered. NPT Ment2Be initiative to provide mentoring opportunities to low paid women and other employees who require mentoring support

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A proposal to introduce Career Coaching Capacity into the HR team will be brought forward to CDG early in the 23 / 24 financial year. This resource, working alongside recruitment specialists, will seek to ensure that our employees know and understand how to access internal career development opportunities. ▪ Introduce a financial awareness programme within learning and development options.
	Training for line managers on NPT's pay and benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Include information on pay and benefits and advice on communicating this with staff when necessary within the Leadership and Management Programme and corporate induction. ▪ Provide resources for managers on how to have these conversations and ensure they are included in all 1:1s and supervision meetings, if relevant ▪ Introduce financial wellbeing champions to guide employees in the right direction when they look for support.
Partnership Working	Maintaining our relationships with our partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure open, consistent lines of communication are established and maintained with partners. ▪ Be active in researching and creating potential new partnerships that could help support employee financial wellbeing.
Communications	Improving our communication methods with staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improve induction material on rewards. ▪ Send regular alerts/reminders to employees on policy changes that will affect their financial well-being, for example increase in automatic enrolment contributions etc ▪ Refresh communications on existing benefits and send regular reminder emails. ▪ Introduce total reward statements. ▪ Include information about benefits and the importance of making long-term financial provisions in induction or mandatory training. ▪ Set metrics for objectives of financial well-being communications. ▪ Package financial well-being guidance/information within overall health and well-being strategy. ▪ Harness ideas from the workforce within communications – avoid 'top-down' corporate messages in newsletters/briefings.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Deliver targeted webinars run by external providers.▪ Run regular financial education days, during which employees are exposed to information or can attend presentations or workshops on particular financial topics or offered access to independent financial advisers.▪ Link financial well-being messages to HR systems in order to harness significant life events in employee lifecycles, for example maternity returners.▪ Enable and promote private employee forums for knowledge sharing linked to financial topics/products/services.▪ Consider communicating financial 'app of the week' initiatives for financial planning, with 'user ratings' e.g., apps like Emma.▪ Target information based on the income level and 'generation' segmentation of the workforce.▪ Train and support line managers in providing/signposting to financial guidance at times of significant employee life events, for example promotion, marriage, birth of child.▪ Provide links to information that gets 'back to basics' on financial topics, for example how to budget, credit scores, interest rates, and so on.
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