

Human Resources Committee

9 June 2006

Health, Work and Well Being



Report of Kim Jobson, Head of Human Resources

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide background and an update on the work being done linked to the Government's strategy of improving the health and well being of people at work.

Background

- 2 The Government initiated a strategy in 2005¹ aimed at the prevention of ill-health and accidents in the workplace. The strategy stemmed from their White Paper '*Choosing Health: Making Healthier Choices Easier*. It envisaged a partnership approach, "to break the link between ill-health & inactivity, to advance the prevention of ill-health & injury, to encourage good management of occupational health and to transform opportunities for people to recover from illness while at work".
- 3 The programme hopes to stimulate support for the individual to manage minor ill-health problems through assisting with access to swift treatment opportunities, help in return to work following a lengthy absence from work and help people avoid work-related health problems through occupational health support.
- 4 The key themes of the strategy are based around the appointment of a national Director for Occupational Health to coordinate the overall approach and raising awareness of the relationship between work and health & well being. The intention is to engage with stakeholders & initiate a national debate that will evolve the approach to occupational health, well being and rehabilitation at work. Focus will also be on improving working lives via healthy workplace programmes that not only protect, but also provide opportunity for the individual to make healthier and informed choices. The other key theme is for employers to work with health care services in helping people stay in, and return to, work.

Current Situation within the County Council

- 5 A Health at Work Group has been established to develop our own strategy on health, work and well being linked to the Government agenda. In addition, the Group will make necessary links into our other relevant strategies and work with external partners to develop appropriate action plans. Their remit

¹ *Health, work and well-being - Caring for our future*: Produced by the Department for Work and Pensions, Department of Health and the Health & Safety Executive

includes the provision of information on relevant health issues, providing a forum for sharing good practice and leading on our aim to achieve the Health at Work Award.

- 6 The Health at Work Award forms a focus of the Council's "Health Improvement Action Plan", initially agreed at Cabinet in December 2004. The Primary Care Trusts operate this scheme, aiming to encourage employers to protect and promote employee health by creating a healthier organisational working environment. Our initial target is to satisfy the requirements of the Bronze Award and then move on higher levels. The Strategic Planning & Health Improvement Team in Social Care & Health is leading the Group with support from across Council Services and PCTs.
- 7 While Services look to develop their own portfolio of evidence, there are a number of corporate developments:
 - A launch event for the Group was held in March at County Hall (and other Council venues) to coincide with national 'No Smoking' Day. Activities and advice on offer included how to give up smoking through interactive methods, information stands and drop-in sessions. There were also health & fitness checks and yoga/relaxation classes. Over 300 staff attended the launch and feedback was generally positive - local media coverage also occurred.
 - 'Health, Work and Well-Being' corporate pages have been opened up on the Intranet in March - they can currently be located through the 'Document Library'.
 - Plans are being formulated for a Health & Well Being month across the Council in September, focusing on the promotion of physical activity.
 - Lunchtime walks have been organised for County Council employees.
 - The corporate Health & Safety Team is releasing a series of 'Hot Topics' information reminders - recent subjects include guidance on slips, trips and falls'.
 - A review of the Workplace Smoking Policy has commenced, linked into the development of national legislation for 2006-07.
 - Work is underway on topics such as the development of a corporate Stress Prevention Programme and the feasibility of individual health checks.

Recommendation

- 8 Members are asked to note the information provided. Further reports will be brought to the Committee when appropriate. Your views and comments are invited on this information.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Finance - none specific. The programme is geared towards improving the health of the workforce and if this aim were successful, this would contribute to lesser negative ill-health implications from the Council's workforce.

Staffing - achieving health at work awards along with the promotion of actual activities should have a positive impact on employees.

Equalities and Diversity - tackling health inequalities requires both a universal and targeted approach to reach excluded groups.

Accommodation - none specific.

Crime and disorder - none specific.

Sustainability - none specific.

Human rights - it is not anticipated that there will be any negative impact on human rights.

Localities & Rurality - programmes are geared to be across the County Council workforce, particularly considering the event in September.

Young people - the agenda is aimed at all employees, including young people.

Consultation - initiatives are consulted upon across all Services and with external bodies when appropriate.

Health