

Appendix 5 - Employee Health and Wellbeing

The Service continues to promote the value of health and wellbeing with employees throughout all roles and committed to establishing a positive health and wellbeing culture within the workplace, which includes promoting awareness and understanding of wellbeing, implementing effective and fair processes, and instilling positive behaviour by all. The Service recognises that mental and physical health and wellbeing are equally important and acknowledges the potential impact that work can have on both.

Human Resources work closely with the Service's Occupational Health provider in managing employees continued attendance at work, through the routine services they provide and will seek advice to guide in the management and progression of attendance management cases, ensuring employees receives appropriate and reasonable support. All employees with over 28 days sickness absence are managed under the Attendance Management procedure and referred to Occupational Health. For any sickness due to stress, anxiety or depression, employees is automatically referred to Occupational Health regardless of the length of their absence.

Occupational Health determines how work, or the workplace might impact on an employee, as well as how health, lifestyle or personal circumstances may impact on their ability to attend work or to return to work. Working with Occupational Health, the line manager and employee, every effort is made to get the employee back to work as soon as reasonably practicable. Where appropriate and when recommended by Occupational Health, physiotherapy is provided to employees. For cases of long-term sickness absence relating to stress, anxiety, and depression and PTSD, and when recommended by Occupational Health, specialist counselling can also be provided.

All employees have access to an employee assistance programme, a free, independent, and confidential service, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, online or on the phone. The service offers expert advice, guidance, and support to help resolve a wide range of issues, and they will aim to answer any questions immediately or refer the employee to the most appropriate advisor, counsellor, or source of information. In addition, monthly newsletters, and webinars on a variety of topics are available to employees via the Health Assured App and online, and regularly published on the Service's Intranet.

The Service's Welfare Officer is an additional point of contact to ensure employees have access to appropriate welfare support arrangements by providing advice, guidance, and assistance to those absent from work, returning to work, or going through difficult personal circumstances. In addition, the Welfare Officer will provide advice and guidance to line managers to assist with individual cases where welfare

support is required, including return to work plans and ongoing support. The Welfare Officer, along with members of the Service's mental wellbeing support network (another source of support) can signpost employees to appropriate wellbeing support.

The mental wellbeing support network has 37 mental health first-aiders across the Service. This information has been shared with employees throughout the Service and members of the team are easily identifiable with dedicated lanyards being worn and names posted on noticeboards in all Service Premises.

Trauma support training has been provided for 12 new debriefers, bringing the cadre of available trauma support debriefers to 22. The purpose of trauma support is to provide reassurance about natural reactions to traumatic situations and an opportunity to discuss coping strategies. The focus of debriefing sessions is to see how individuals are coping following a traumatic event in order for appropriate support to be provided and to help individuals adjust post incident after a traumatic event.

The Service's Intranet has a dedicated "Wellbeing Hub" which is regularly updated with a range of subject areas designed to support Mental, Physical and Personal health and wellbeing.

Service procedures and guidance documents have been updated or created, from supporting menopause in the workplace, flexible working, supporting employees with mental and physical disabilities, supporting employees experiencing domestic abuse and violence, supporting employees with neurodiversity and hybrid working. A suicide awareness package has been added to the Service's online training system and is accessible by all employees. National campaigns are supported and communicated to employees throughout the year and a range of "me too" articles have been produced and published on the Service's Intranet, as a way of sharing employee's stories to help others.

The Service has a social media Wellbeing group on Facebook with over 100 members (and growing), this allows Human Resources to share wellbeing messages with employees using a range of more modern mediums.

The Service has worked closely with The Fire Fighters Charity to introduce online wellness workshops, specifically designed to help and support the health and wellbeing of employees. In addition, The Fire Fighters Charity and Hope for The Community have partnered to run self-management programme for individuals looking to improve their mental wellbeing and resilience, called the Hope Programme, a six-week interactive online programme, focusing on individuals and their wellbeing. Working with The Fire Fighter Charity, the Service has also

established “living well” groups. The intention of these groups is to provide a meeting place for former employees to network and access support where necessary. The Fire Fighters Charity also offers residential mental wellbeing and rehabilitation programmes that are available to current and past employee.