

CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF: CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY
DATE: 9TH DECEMBER 2020
REPORT OF: DIRECTOR OF TRANSFORMATION
AUTHOR: LAWRENCE HOWARD

SUBJECT: MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY 2021-2025

Purpose of Report

1. This report sets out the background to the Service's approach to mental health and wellbeing and seeks approval to publish the Mental Health Strategy 2021-2025.

Recommended: That

[1] the Mental Health Strategy 2021 – 2025 be considered and approved.

Background

2. In today's increasingly complex and fast-paced world there is a general concern about the pressures in people's lives that can have an impact on mental health and wellbeing. The nature of the work carried out by firefighters and fire staff means that they will be exposed to traumatic and challenging situations.
3. The Service's ambition for mental health is simple; to maintain a healthy and productive workforce treating mental health with the same passion and drive as is afforded to physical health.
4. Through the Service's commitment to making mental health a corporate priority and by it encouraging all staff to take responsibility for positive mental health, the Service believe that staff will be able to remain mentally fit and function effectively in their roles with a positive sense of connection with others.
5. The Mental Health strategy describes how the Service will support the mental health and wellbeing of staff through education, leadership, and access to positive and professional support. It also describes how the Service intends to mainstream mental health awareness and how the culture will promote the ability of staff to speak out openly about mental health concerns without judgement.

Information

6. To date, the Service has put in place a number of interventions which have raised awareness and placed heightened emphasis on the mental health support available to staff.
7. In 2019 the Fire Authority approved the establishment of a dedicated Mental Health Advisor and in October 2020 a Mental Health Steering Group was created to provide leadership, advice and coordination of the work required to progress and support the Service's aspiration to be a beacon of excellence for mental health in the workplace.
8. Underpinning the delivery of the Mental Health Strategy will be an action plan that will be reviewed by the Mental Health Steering Group on a quarterly basis. Bi-annual updates on progress will also be presented to the Performance and Overview Committee.
9. The Mental Health Strategy (Appendix 1 to this report) has 4 key elements:
 - **Leadership and Responsibility**
The achievement and maintenance of positive mental health across the Service will be the responsibility of all staff, with visible senior leadership commitment and everyone encouraged to take responsibility for their own mental health and wellbeing.
 - **Communication and Education**
The prioritisation of good mental health and wellbeing will be achieved through delivering a systematic programme of engagement, promotion and education.
 - **Support and Intervention**
Support and development of interventions to improve mental health will be delivered with emphasis on increasing organisational confidence, skills and capability in addressing risks and dealing with mental health issues.
 - **Culture and Compassion**
An open, positive and compassionate culture around mental health will be created to increase awareness and accountability whilst ensuring the work environment supports a reduction in the exacerbation of existing mental health problems and concerns.
10. Pages 12–16 of the Strategy outline the aspirations and some of the actions that relate to these elements.

Financial Implications

11. There are costs associated with the delivery of the Mental Health Strategy specifically in relation to extending the network of qualified Mental Health First Aiders and Trauma Risk Management Practitioners.
12. These costs are incorporated within the 2020/2021 budget bidding process which will be considered by the Fire Authority in February 2021.

Legal Implications

13. In developing the Mental Health Strategy, the Service is mindful of its legal duty to address any issues in the workplace that could lead to mental ill health. The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 requires the Service to ensure that it takes measures to control any risks of stress and under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, it is required to assess the risk of stress-related ill health arising from work activities.
14. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) also expects the Service to carry out suitable and sufficient risk assessments for stress, and to take action to tackle any problems identified by that risk assessment. The HSE's Management Standards outlined on page 7 of the Strategy define the characteristics, or culture, of an organisation where the risks from work-related stress are being effectively managed and controlled. These factors have been incorporated into a wellbeing risk assessment that the Service will be requiring managers to undertake in the planning stages of all future change programmes

Equality and Diversity Implications

15. The Equality Act 2010 requires the Service to make reasonable adjustments for staff with a mental health condition.
16. The ageing workforce also places more emphasis on creating a healthy workforce to sustain an older population of staff who may have greater health needs in the workplace. The Wellbeing Impact Assessment and Equality Impact Assessment will identify any relevant implications..

Environmental Implications

17. None identified.

**CONTACT: DONNA LINTON, GOVERNANCE AND CORPORATE PLANNING
MANAGER
TEL [01606] 868804**

BACKGROUND PAPERS: NONE