

CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF: PERFORMANCE AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE
DATE: 24 NOVEMBER 2021
REPORT OF: DIRECTOR OF TRANSFORMATION
AUTHOR: LAWRENCE HOWARD

SUBJECT: MENTAL HEALTH - 6 MONTH UPDATE
REPORT 2021

Purpose of Report

1. This report provides an update in respect of the work that is ongoing in respect of Mental Health and provides insight regarding upcoming work.

Recommended:

- [1] Members review and consider the information presented in this report.

Background

2. The post of Mental Health and Wellbeing Advisor was introduced into the Service in July 2019, following the recommendation of the Staff Engagement Forum and approval by the Fire Authority.
3. The Service's first ever Mental Health Strategy was approved by the Fire Authority in January 2021. This was developed by the Mental Health Steering Group (MHSG) following consultations across the Service. The Strategy provides strategic direction and clear aims for the Service to ensure sufficient emphasis is placed around mental health to give it parity of esteem with physical health. The Strategy also incorporates the wider notion of our Service's values and our links to our wider communities and aims to support the Service's ambition to become an employer of choice and a beacon of excellence in the area of mental health.
4. An Action Plan has been produced with the MHSG and was signed off on the 2 June 2021. The Group will be monitoring and supporting the progression of the Action Plan.

Progress over the last 6 Months

5. The MHSG was established in October 2020 and meets on a quarterly basis. Its purpose is to provide leadership, advice and coordination to the actions and plans required to progress and support the delivery of the Strategy.

6. Within the last six months the MHSG welcomed Cllr Gina Lewis as the Mental Health Member Champion and despite the ongoing challenges of the Pandemic, the group has continued to meet on a quarterly basis. The next meeting is scheduled for January 2022 and it is hoped that this will be the first face to face meeting of the group.
7. The revised TRiM process and procedure has been in place for approximately two years and the number of TRiM practitioners now stands at 60 across the Service. This follows some recent training in October 2021 and further training courses will be planned during 2022 to further increase the number of TRiM practitioners across the Service. The ultimate aspiration is to have a qualified TRiM practitioner on each Station and Watch.
8. During the last six months, a project team was set up to undertake a review of the TRiM process. The review was commissioned by the MHSG with the task of looking at the take-up levels of the TRiM offer and to identify how the Service can ensure the programme is promoted and delivered effectively. To date the project team have met on four occasions and has had input from the Staff Engagement Forum. It is expected that the findings of the review will be reported back to the MHSG in January 2022.
9. In addition to TRiM, the Service has also maintained its appetite to grow the network of Mental Health First Aiders (MHFA). Currently the Service has 16 Mental Health First Aiders.
10. The aim is to significantly increase these numbers year on year. On the completion of the next two training sessions, the Service will have 48 MHFAs. Mental health first aid training had been scheduled for earlier this year but had to be rescheduled due to Covid-19 restrictions. New dates are being planned in conjunction with the external trainers for the Prince's Trust team and other staff members.
11. Whilst we are beginning to offer more structured opportunities in mental health education and awareness, some staff have asked for an informal, more flexible way of engaging with the mental health agenda. Following discussions across the Service, three members of staff undertook to develop the Wellbeing Community Group. This is based around a Facebook group that individuals can join and engage with as they please. The group offers socially distanced walks, meditation and a variety of wellbeing activities. There are currently over 70 staff members on this group.
12. Another area that has been discussed at the MHSG is widening the offer of the Sports and Social and Welfare Committee. Historically the Committee's main focus has been around physical activities which is not deemed to be entirely inclusive. In an attempt to provide a wider range of activities the MHSG have offered to assist and two members of the Steering Group have joined the Sports and Social Committee.
13. The Service recently ran a series of events to mark World Mental Health Day which fell on a Sunday this year. Events ran throughout the week to give all staff the opportunity to engage and take some time for reflection and a range of

activities were offered which included walks, yoga, mindfulness sessions and a health cooking competition. During the week the Service also hosted a half day Mental Health Conference at Sadler Road. The highlights of this event were the launch of a bespoke “Cheshireopoly” board game which prompted discussion around mental health themes and an inspirational presentation around mental health and resilience by Ian Smith and Jimmy Gittins from the State of Mind Sports Charity.

14. Of particular note was the development of a mosaic to mark World Mental Health Day 2021. This idea was progressed based on the experience of one of the MHSG members who had articulated how mosaic making had had a positive impact on her mental health during lockdown. The design below was chosen through consulting with the Wellbeing Community Group and the MHSG and the mosaic was developed at Sadler Road during Mental Health week.



15. The black tiles represent the distress associated with poor mental health and are framed by bright colours and patterns that remind us there are many positive ways to maintain our well-being. The mosaic will be mounted on the wall outside the canteen at Sadler Road.

16. Other Mental Health events and campaigns during the last six months include:

Webinars: 6 May 2021. ‘Maternal Mental Health’.

The Service joined with Motherwell., a Crewe based charity run by women for women and delivered a webinar on Maternal Mental Health.

May - 3 – 9 May . Maternal Mental Health Awareness Week.

With Motherwell, the service provided information and signposting to events available nation wide marking Maternal Mental Health Awareness Week.

10 to 16. Mental Health Awareness Week.

The Service signposted staff to a range of activities and events run by Mind and the Mental Health Foundation throughout the week.

17 to 23. # Speak Your Mind. Mental Health Awareness Week.

June - 7 to 13 June. Carers Week.

The Service partnered with Enable (the Police Carers Network) to deliver information sessions on Carers Rights: a Q&A panel with Mid-Cheshire Mind and Service personnel sharing their experiences as Carers and the impact on their mental health. The support available to Carers was highlighted and HR reminded staff of the benefits and support our policies provide for those with caring responsibilities.

All events were promoted through the Intranet, the weekly Green and the monthly Alert.

Mental Health and Wellbeing awareness have also continued to be promoted through Inductions, the Step-Up programme, the new Step-In programme and the Apprentice programmes.

17. The Mental Health Advisor has continued to be visible making at least one visit to every watch, section, department and team across the Service each year. This averages approximately 120 visits. Although during the Pandemic these were mostly virtual, face to face visits have now recommenced.
18. At the beginning of the year the Mental Health Advisor also partnered with HR colleagues in the delivery of over 100 Attendance Management and Wellbeing Roadshow visits. The purpose of the roadshow was to share the updated Attendance Management Policy and to discuss the Covid-19 guidance, and to allay any concerns and issues relating to return to work.
19. Over the course of the last six months the Mental Health Advisor has continued to support and attend staff network groups and in recent months most frequently with the Limitless network. This was in respect of the launch of new Menopause Policy and a Menopause Awareness Day where menopause champions for mentoring and buddying came together to develop some related initiatives such as hygiene packs for female staff.
20. The Mental Health Advisor has also been a regular attendee at Firepride breakfasts and has presented on the theme of the LGBT community and mental health.
21. Links have been made with a Crewe based charity called Motherwell who offer support to single parents, and women who have experienced trauma before, during, and/or after childbirth. The charity has a forum called FlourisHER that offers support, training and information on a range of women's topics. Kate Blakemore, the founder of Motherwell, delivered a webinar on the 6th May 2021, marking Maternal Mental Health Awareness Week. This local charity is a free resource that all staff can access. The Service will also be using this platform to advertise Prince's Trust programme opportunities.

22. To ensure parity between mental and physical health it has been important for the Mental Health Advisor to link in regularly with the Fitness Advisor and the Health and Safety Advisor and the training department. The Mental Health Advisor also maintains links with external individuals and agencies and is part of the Joint Emergency Services mental health group and Chester West and Chester Suicide Prevention Group. Other links are with Able Futures: the Richmond Fellowship; and Mid Cheshire Mind.

Priorities for the Next 6 Months

23. The TRiM review will be considered by the MHSG at the January 2022 meeting. Recommendations from the review will be added to the Mental Health Action Plan for implementation. Dates will also be scheduled for all TRiM practitioners to have 2 days of refresher training over the course of the next 2 years.
24. In response to staff feedback plans are in place to develop a Fathers Group. This will provide advice and support and a safe space for new and existing fathers to discuss issues relating to home and family life. The first meeting has been planned for December 2021.
25. The joint Carers Week delivered with our Police colleagues in June has led to the recent launch of a Carers network within the fire service. The Police have 'Enable' and they are hoping to support our Carers network. This group is in response to a number of requests from staff that we, as a Service, offer something for Carers. The first meeting is scheduled for December 2021.
26. The Mental Health Advisor's Station and Department visits will continue to maintain visibility. It is planned that this cycle of approximately 120 visits will be completed by mid-December 2021.
27. Continue to work with the MHSG to progress the mental health agenda by implementing its Action Plan.
28. The installation of the Mosaic is scheduled for January 2021 to coincide with the first face to face meeting of the MHSG.
29. Work with the Leadership Development team to ensure that the concept of compassionate and mindful leadership is incorporated within all leadership development programmes.
30. As part of our work to have a parity of esteem between mental health and physical health, the Mental Health Advisor will join the Fitness Advisor to make joint visits, starting in the new year. Whilst attending for their fitness test, staff will be given the option to have a mental health MOT.

Legal Implications

31. The Service recognises its legal duties to tackling stress and anxiety which could lead to mental ill health. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) expects the Service to carry out suitable and sufficient risk assessments and to take action to tackle any problems identified.
32. A Wellbeing Impact Assessment has been designed as an addendum to the Equality Impact Assessment process to enable suitable risk assessments to be carried out relating to organisational and policy changes. The HSE risk management standards have also been incorporated into the new appraisal process to facilitate discussions on an individual basis and to help identify any risks.

Equality and Diversity Implications

33. Equality and diversity is closely aligned with mental health. This includes making reasonable adjustments for staff with a mental health condition, protecting the privacy of a staff member who has a mental health condition, and ensuring that we do not take any adverse action against a staff member because of a mental health condition.
34. More recently there has been an emphasis on the ageing workforce due to greater life expectancy. Based on workforce planning predictions it is inevitable that there will be an increase of staff in older age groups. This places more emphasis on the need to create a healthy workforce to sustain an older population of staff who may have greater health needs in the workplace.

Environmental Implications

35. None

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: NONE