

CORPORATE HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE – 11TH AUGUST 2010

**SUBJECT: EMPLOYEE PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING STRATEGY – BRIEFING
NOTE**

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The following report is provided to Members, Management and Trade Union Safety Representatives as an update on the proposed way forward with regards to the management of 'work related stress'.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Stress and pressure management is a key priority for Health and Safety, Occupational Health and Human Resources, the three service areas will work closely together to ensure that appropriate support is in place for employees and managers to avoid ill-health as a result of work. The HSE defines stress as "the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other type of demand placed on them". This definition seems very negative, as each person will react differently under pressure, some people thrive on an element of pressure such as working to a deadline, while other people may find it difficult to cope. As people are very complex, the way in which they react to events within their lives varies considerably. Therefore the arrangements we put in place to manage stress will largely be specific to the individual employee.

3. PROACTIVE/PREVENTATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

- 3.1 The Authority needs to be proactive in it's approach to managing stress, with early intervention being the key to avoid staff going off work due to perceived work related stress. A first draft psychological wellbeing policy and management arrangement have been discussed and approved at a recent meeting of the Corporate H&S Group and will now proceed through the consultation process.
- 3.2 In addition, a strategy is being drafted with key actions and timescales to progress a range of proactive and preventative measures to reduce the risk of employees suffering work related stress.
- 3.3 Good management is crucial to the effectiveness of the strategy and one key area will be working with Care First to develop structured management training in how to be pre-emptive in dealing with stress. Such training will be rolled out on a risk prioritised basis, although there will be information and briefing sessions delivered to line managers across all service areas.
- 3.4 The Employee Health and Wellbeing Group will also play a key role in moving forward proactive arrangements in the management of work related stress.

4. REACTIVE/SUPPORT ARRANGEMENTS

- 4.1 Where an employee advises that they are suffering pressure or anxiety linked to their work tasks/demands etc., arrangements have been drafted to quickly address and deal with such issues. This will hopefully provide an early intervention to avoid an employee falling ill, or support the rehabilitation and return to work of an employee who has reported sick citing work related stress. In all circumstances the well being of the employee is paramount.
- 4.2 The arrangements have been used for some time within Education and Leisure and are now starting to be used in other Directorates. Arrangements include a modified HSE 'stress questionnaire' and a detailed process of risk assessment. As well as supporting the employee the arrangements meet statutory and civil requirements placed on the Authority.
- 4.3 It will be essential that employees engage in the process in order to assist themselves and managers in dealing with the issues which are causing them anxiety. It must be noted that reasonable adjustments can be made to alleviate or resolve workplace stressors, however there may be individual non-work related factors which may not be easy to resolve.

5. WAY FORWARD

- 5.1 A strategy will be submitted to the next Corporate H&S Group with tasks, responsibilities and timescales allocated and draft documents sent out for wider consultation.

6. RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 That the contents of the report are noted and discussed.

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