

Committee(s)	Dated:
Establishment Committee	21 May 2021
Subject: Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy Review (Version 01 – 01 Draft)	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	1, 2, 3
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
If so, how much?	
What is the source of Funding?	
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?	
Report of: Director of Human Resources	For Decision
Report author: Health Safety and Wellbeing Manager	

Summary

The mental health and wellbeing of employees remains a key priority for the City of London Corporation especially in times of organisational change and during the recovery from the Covid-19 national emergency.

The City Corporation has an existing Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy that was endorsed by the Establishment Committee in May 2018. It is now due for its 3-year periodic review.

Stakeholders were consulted on proposed minor revisions to the policy to ensure it remains relevant.

The policy is supported by a Mental Health and Wellbeing Action Plan along with subordinate procedures and guidance. The action plan has also been reviewed and refreshed. A brief summary of some of the key achievements from the action plan are included in this report.

Recommendation(s)

Members of the Establishment Committee are asked to:

- Approve the revised corporate Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

Main Report

Background

1. According to the Mental Health Taskforce one in four persons will experience some form of mental health issue in any given year. The Chief Medical Officer, (Department of Health) indicates that mental illness is the largest single source of burden of disease in the UK – no other health condition matches mental illness in combined extent of prevalence, persistence and breadth of impact.
2. The latest estimates from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) show: The total number of cases of work-related stress, depression or anxiety in 2019/20 was 828,000, a prevalence rate of 2,440 per 100,000 workers.
3. Such large numbers do not describe the human cost of mental ill-health.
4. In the UK, the rate of work-related stress, depression and anxiety has increased (statistically significantly higher) in recent years (ibid).
5. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) noted that:
“Disruption to the economy towards the end of 2019/20 due to the emergence of COVID-19 as a national health issue had the potential to have impacted on workplace injury and work-related ill health data for 2019/20” (HSE, 2020).

Current Position

6. **Sickness absence reporting (rolling year) to December 2020** at the City of London Corporation indicates that the top three recorded reasons for absence, accounting for almost 40% total were:
 - Anxiety/stress/depression/other psychiatric illnesses (1st)
 - All MSD problems -including back and neck problems (2nd)
 - Other reason (not classified elsewhere) (3rd)
7. Mental ill-health and MSDs are often skewed towards longer-term absence. A manager will be aware if an employee considers any sickness to be work related or not and will manage sickness accordingly. However, only the type of sickness is recorded for monitoring purposes and so it is not possible to differentiate between absence due to home and/or work factors in the statistics.
8. Grounded in a growing body of evidence including awareness of best practice, the “*CityWell*” (employee wellbeing) programme was re-focused, following a report to the Establishment Committee in February 2018 on mental health as the top priority, supported by a wider health promotion / wellness programme.
9. The City Corporation introduced a Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy which was agreed by the Establishment Committee in May 2018 and is now due for a 3-year periodic review.
10. The Policy is supported by a subordinate guidance and a corporate Mental Health and Wellbeing Action Plan (**2018-2023: Last updated March 2021 as Version 2.8**). Key achievements include:

- Over 150 employees trained as Mental Health First Aiders, representing most departments.
- Implementation and embedding of a Wellbeing Ambassadors' Network
- Regular wellbeing events and campaigns (mental health and lifestyle promotions) including supporting the annual Lord Mayor's *This is Me* campaign
- Mental health awareness training for managers and leaders – over 30% trained. Paused during the Covid-19 Pandemic but to be restarted virtually from April 2021
- Increase in storytelling and sharing experiences. Anecdotal and other evidence (e.g. staff *Your Voice Matters* survey) that City Corporation colleagues generally feel more able to talk about their mental health and know how to access further support
- Routinely monitor employee mental health (monitor and review sickness absence data –developing of wellbeing Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
- Development of mental and wellbeing resources (guidance, documents, assessment tools) including bespoke support and resources during the Covid-19 pandemic and *Concerns about suicide – just ask* guidance with tools
- Work collaboratively with Occupational Health, Public Health, Staff Networks and external partners / initiatives including the Responsible Business working group

11. During the Covid-19 pandemic a dedicated Mental Health Resources Hub was developed. Additional counselling support has been made available and the City Corporation's Mental Health First Aiders stepped up by implementing a virtual support network. Monitoring of key data including the anonymised use of the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is ongoing.

Proposals

12. The corporate Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy was reviewed by the Health Safety and Wellbeing Team and is judged to be still fit for purpose. Reference was made to the new Bullying and Harassment Procedure that was agreed by the Establishment Committee in December 2020 and explicit reference made to '*Managers will demonstrate leadership by active and visible participation in and promotion of wellbeing programmes*'. Stakeholders including the Safety Managers' Forum and Health Safety and Wellbeing Committee are being consulted on the proposal to ensure it remains relevant.
13. The Town Clerk agreed to the revised (draft) Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy returning to the Establishment Committee.
14. The corporate Mental Health and Wellbeing Action plan has also be reviewed and refreshed to ensure it remains fit for purpose and continues to support positively the Policy.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

15. As there are no substantive changes proposed to the existing Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy the implications are expected to be neutral.

Strategic implications

16. Everything we do supports the delivery of the Corporate Plan's three strategic objectives, including contributing to a flourishing society, especially:

- *People are safe and feel safe (Outcome 1)*
- *People enjoy good health and wellbeing (Outcome 2)*
- *People have equal opportunities to enrich their lives and reach their full potential (Outcome 3)*

17. The corporate Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy is entirely consistent with the above, providing the governance and framework to support these outcomes, and drive performance.

Financial and resource implications

18. Employers that take steps to support mental health at work will benefit from a more productive, happy and loyal workforce. Those that ignore the issue, or who undermine the mental health of their staff, risk not only the health of the people who work for them but the wealth of their business and the health of the economy as a whole.

Legal and risk implications

19. Robustly implementing our corporate Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy and subordinate procedures and guidance reduces the potential risk of civil action and / or potential enforcement or criminal prosecution.

Equalities implications

20. The City Corporation is committed to:

- Eliminating discrimination and promoting equality and diversity in its Policies, Procedures and Guidelines, and
- Designing and implementing services, policies and measures that meet the diverse needs of its population and workforce, ensuring that no individual or group is disadvantaged

21. As an employer we aim to create and promote a culture where employees can talk openly about their job and mental health concerns and to report difficulties without fear of discrimination. Our Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy positively supports this aim.

Climate implications

22. None identified

Security implications

23. None identified

Conclusion

24. The Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy remains relevant. It provides a corporate framework for articulating responsibilities and is supported by subordinate procedures and guidance and an action plan.

25. Mental health and wellbeing remain a key priority nationally and for the City Corporation, especially during times of organisational change and external challenges: The policy will support our transition to new ways of working under the TOM and during the recovery from Covid-19 pandemic.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy (draft 01 – 01)

References

Health and Safety Executive (2020). [Work-related stress, anxiety or depression statistics in Great Britain, 2020](#)

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