



**SOUTH  
KESTEVEN  
DISTRICT  
COUNCIL**

# Employment Committee

22 September 2021

**Report of:** Councillor Annie Mason

Cabinet Member for People & Safer Communities




## Mental Health and Wellbeing

An update on the Council's Mental Health and Wellbeing action plan.

### Report Author

Alice Atkins, Local Government Association Graduate



 Alice.Atkins@southkesteven.gov.uk

Corporate Priority:	Decision type:	Wards:
High Performing Council	Administrative	All Wards

<b>Reviewed by:</b>	Alan Robinson, Deputy Chief Executive	1 September 2021
<b>Approved by:</b>	Karen Bradford, Chief Executive	13 September 2021
<b>Signed off by:</b>	Councillor Annie Mason, Cabinet Member for People & Safer Communities	14 September 2021

### Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s)

1. Notes the update on the Mental Health and Wellbeing action plan at South Kesteven District Council

# **1 The Background to the Report**

- 1.1 At Employment Committee on 10 March 2021, the findings of the January 2021 Health and Wellbeing 'Pulse' Survey were presented. The findings showed how Council staff were feeling following a third national lockdown and continued working from home. The findings also provided an understanding of what staff wanted regarding wellbeing provision.
- 1.2 These findings led to the development of a Mental Health and Wellbeing Action Plan (Appendix 1) which was also presented at Employment Committee on 10 March 2021. The Action Plan outlined the various wellbeing plans which were to take place during the period March – June 2021.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to update the Employment Committee on the actions included in the Wellbeing Action Plan.

# **2 Mental Health and Wellbeing Action Plan Update**

- 2.1 Since March 2021, the HR Team have implemented the actions outlined in the Mental Health and Wellbeing Action Plan. During this time, feedback was also received from staff relating to some of the wellbeing initiatives which have taken place. The Mental Health and Wellbeing Action Plan has also been updated to include future mental health and wellbeing support plans. Updates on the individual actions, as outlined in the action plan, are as follows:

## **2.2 Virtual sessions on mindfulness, mental health and resilience**

Results from the January 2021 'pulse' survey showed that 42% of staff said that they would like sessions on mindfulness, and 39% of staff said that they would like sessions on mental health.

The HR Team worked with organisation Get Sorted People to provide GP-led workshops on a range of mental health-related topics, including mindfulness, mental health awareness, and personal resilience. These sessions were limited to 15 members of staff per session and were reasonably well-attended.

Virtual sessions on mental health-related topics were also provided by the Council's EAP provider, Health Assured. These sessions focused on mental health, mindfulness and resilience. The sessions were limited to 20 members of staff per session and were well-attended.

Virtual sessions on mindfulness, mental health and resilience also ran for managers. These sessions included additional information on how managers can support the mental health and wellbeing of their teams and how to signpost members of staff to available further support.

Information on all sessions was communicated to staff in advance via email and shared with the Council's Unison rep. Feedback was received from some of the staff who attended the sessions (Appendix 2).

## **2.3 Virtual workshops promoting the Council's Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)**

Results from the January 'pulse' survey showed that 18% of staff said that they did not know where to go to get support for any mental wellbeing issues.

The HR Team worked with the Council's EAP provider, Health Assured, to provide sessions for staff on the EAP. These sessions took place virtually at the beginning of March and were run by Health Assured's Corporate Relations Manager. The sessions provided staff with a greater understanding of the EAP and how they could make use of it.

A separate EAP Awareness session ran for managers with the aim to provide them with a greater understanding of the EAP and how they could make use of it, as well as how they could signpost their team members to the Programme.

The EAP Awareness sessions were limited to 20 members of staff per session and were well-attended.

Feedback from these sessions was received from some of the staff and managers who attended (Appendix 2).

The HR Team have since explored running these sessions for Members, and a number of these are due to take place virtually in the early Autumn.

#### 2.4 **Encouraging staff to create their own virtual social activities/groups**

Some staff have engaged with their own virtual social groups.

The Menopause Café has also continued to run virtually to provide support for staff's physical and mental wellbeing.

#### 2.5 **GP-led virtual workshops on diet, weight loss management and smoking**

Results from the January 'pulse' survey showed that 46% of staff said that their personal health and wellbeing goal this year was to improve their diet.

The HR Team worked with organisation Get Sorted People to provide GP-led workshops on a range of health-related topics, including diet and weight lost management. The sessions were run by experienced GPs alongside a HR professional. The workshops took place virtually throughout April and May and focused on the following topics: menopause, women's health, men's health, managing weight, quitting smoking.

These sessions were limited to 15 members of staff per session and were well-attended with 'Let's Talk about Managing my Weight' reaching full sign-up capacity.

Feedback from these workshops was received from some of the staff who attended (Appendix 2).

#### 2.6 **Working with senior team around supporting employees to maintain a healthy work/life balance**

The issue of work life balance has been raised with the senior team and they are aware of this issue as well as the flexible working options which are available to staff. Senior staff are raising these issues with their teams.

#### 2.7 **Assessing possible options to address the additional financial costs for employees working from home**

This will be part of the options analysis which will be considered as the Council progresses the options appraisal for its operating model in the future. A potential operating model could be a blend of home and office environment working. The Council is currently incurring costs on its existing offices and will need to offset a reduction in these operating costs if it considers a financial arrangement for staff operating remotely.

#### 2.8 **Other plans to support the mental health and wellbeing of SKDC staff and Members**

The Wellbeing Team has continued to support the mental health and wellbeing of SKDC staff and Members by providing regular wellbeing articles via email.

As part of 'Healthy Eating Week', virtual cookery sessions ran for staff throughout July. The HR team and two work experience students at the Council worked with a professional chef from local cookery company, Homemade House, to provide these. Two of the four sessions were pre-recorded to ensure that they would be fully accessible to staff. These sessions were communicated to all staff in advance via email and were well-attended.

The use of additional pulse surveys will be considered going forward to continue so that the wellbeing of staff is monitored, and any necessary actions can be implemented.

### **3 Next Steps – Communication and Implementation of the Decision**

- 3.1 Continue to implement the future mental health and wellbeing plans, as outlined in the Mental Health and Wellbeing Action Plan.

### **4 Financial Implications**

- 4.1 There is a specific budget of £25,000 in the 2021/22 budget framework to support initiatives to support wellbeing activities. This can be used as required to support activities set out in the report.

**Financial Implications reviewed by: Richard Wyles, Assistant Director of Finance and s151 Officer**

### **5 Legal and Governance Implications**

- 5.1 From an employment law perspective, the work on mental health and wellbeing are to be welcomed, as the Council as an employer has legal obligations to look after the health and welfare of its employees.

**Legal Implications reviewed by: Graham Watts, Deputy Monitoring Officer**

### **6 Equality and Safeguarding Implications**

- 6.1 The actions referred to in this report have positive equality implications. The wellbeing sessions covered a range of topics which catered for the diversity of the workforce. The sessions were held virtually and so were easily accessible. An Equality Impact Assessment is being undertaken to ensure that the action plan does not present barriers to participation or disadvantage any protected groups from participation. There are no safeguarding implications resulting from this report.

### **7 Risk and Mitigation**

- 7.1 The key risk associated with the Health and Wellbeing Action Plan is an increase in staff sickness as a result of poor mental health and wellbeing. The actions detailed in the action plan aim to mitigate this risk through supporting the welfare of the Council's employees.  
Community Safety Implications

### **8 Community Safety Implications**

- 8.1 There are no community safety implications relating to this report.

### **9 How will the recommendations support South Kesteven District Council's declaration of a climate emergency?**

- 9.1 The recommendations in this report have no carbon impact.

## **10 Other Implications (where significant)**

10.1 There are no other implications relating to this report.

## **11 Background Papers**

11.1 N/A

## **12 Appendices**

12.1 Appendix 1 – Mental Health and Wellbeing Action Plan

12.2 Appendix 2 – Feedback from webinars