

Mental Health Strategy

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Governance Committee	<i>Finance and Resources</i>	Date approved	<i>April 2021</i>
Review date	<i>September 2022</i>		

Strategic Alignment

Improving the Council's Resource Base – A Workforce Strategy that is built around the needs of the Council (as a single resource base) to deliver the priority outcomes, ensuring future workforce requirements, new skills and innovative approaches, and succession planning are recognised.

[Change Record](#)

Date	<i>September 2022</i>	Author	<i>Fiona Duddy</i>
Change made	Review of existing strategy to reflect ongoing progress within the Council and establishment of Service based groups and Council group for mental health.		

Introduction

North Lanarkshire Council recognises that mental ill health and stress can be associated with many of the leading causes of disease and disability in our society. Promoting and protecting the mental wellbeing of our workforce is important for individuals' physical health, social wellbeing and productivity. Mental wellbeing in the workplace is relevant to all employees and everyone can contribute to improved mental wellbeing at work.

As an employer we are taking a preventative and proactive approach to managing the mental health and wellbeing of our employees.

Addressing workplace mental health and wellbeing can help strengthen the positive, protective factors of employment, reduce risk factors for mental ill health and improve general health. It can also help promote the employment of people who have experienced mental health problems, and support them once they are at work.

Important aspects of our mental health and wellbeing include providing information and raising awareness, promoting preventative and self-management techniques, fostering management skills to deal with issues around mental health and stress effectively, developing a supportive workplace culture, providing stress management and resilience building skills for employees, offering assistance, advice and support to anyone experiencing a mental health problem or returning to work after a period of absence due to mental health problems.

Important aspects of our mental health and wellbeing are having a skilled and knowledgeable workforce who are well informed in how to recognise where there could be a concern and how to address it at an early stage. This includes how employees support their colleagues as well as managers early intervention. As an employer we will strive to ensure our employees have access to information, advice and support where they need it as well as supporting managers themselves following on from any involvement of assisting employees in a mental health situation. We will equip our managers to be effective in how they address and support any employee who has any form of mental health issue. We will work to ensure that there is a stigma free culture within the Council for both existing employees and to attract talent to come and work with us.

1. Scope:

This strategy applies to all North Lanarkshire Council employees.

2. Direction Statement:

The Council is committed to proactively promoting positive mental health and wellbeing in a stigma free workplace.

The Council shall continuously strive, as far as is reasonably practicable, to enhance the mental health and wellbeing of its employees throughout the organisation. This will be achieved through shaping our values to help create a safe, supportive and comfortable environment to work in.

3. The Legal Position

Under the Equality Act (2010) it is illegal to discriminate directly or indirectly against a person who considers themselves to be disabled. You also cannot discriminate against anyone because of an association with a disability, for example, an employee who cares for a disabled relative. A disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment that has a long term, adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities.

Under this legislation, employees experiencing ongoing poor mental health may be considered to have a disability. As an employer, we must therefore ensure that any employee who considers themselves to be disabled is treated fairly and, where appropriate, that we make reasonable adjustments to enable them to do their job to the best of their ability.

Under the Health & Safety at Work etc Act 1974 there is a legal obligation on the Council to protect the health, safety and welfare of its employees and anyone who can be affected by its undertakings.

The Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999 place a requirement on the Council to ensure risk assessments are carried out identifying hazards and putting in place appropriate control measures to protect the health, safety and wellbeing of employees and anyone else who can be affected by our activities. This extends to stress and undertaking appropriate risk assessments.

4. Definitions

"Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community. It is an integral component of health and well-being that underpins our individual and collective abilities to make decisions, build relationships and shape the world we live in. Mental health is a basic human right. And it is crucial to personal, community and socio-economic development." (World Health Organization)

For the purposes of this strategy the following terms will be used:

Mental health – we all have mental health. This is an umbrella term which refers to a range from positive mental health to poor mental health. This can be mild to moderate or more serious, severe and enduring. Your mental health doesn't stay the same. It can fluctuate as circumstances change and as you move through different stages in your life.

Mental health problem – a term that refers to symptoms that meet the criteria for clinical diagnosis of a defined mental health condition – for example, depression or anxiety. However, a diagnosis isn't required to have a mental health problem.

We may find these early warning signs of a problem hard to see in ourselves, and it can help to have managers and colleagues who are knowledgeable, understanding and supportive.

Wellbeing – a term that includes life satisfaction and psychological wellbeing – for example, having a sense of control, purpose in life, a sense of belonging and positive relationships with others. Being comfortable, happy or healthy.

Resilience – a term that refers to the ability to function well under pressure, adapt to changing demands and recover (quickly) from the impact of difficult situations. Like mental health, resilience can fluctuate over time. It can be strengthened through a set of learnable skills and coping mechanisms.

5. Key Priorities

(i) To develop a supportive and stigma free culture, encourage resilience and address factors that may negatively affect mental wellbeing.

Associated actions:

- Establish a Council based mental health group for Service based groups to feed into sharing best practice, participation in national campaigns etc.
- Reduce discrimination and stigma by increasing awareness and understanding of mental health problems
- Informing employees to increase their awareness of mental wellbeing.
- Include information about the mental health and wellbeing strategy in the staff induction programme.

- Provide training at an appropriate level for all employees in the early identification, causes and appropriate management of mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, stress and the effects of change management.

(ii) To support employees to minimise the risk of mental ill health by providing access to relevant information, support and advice on stress, resilience and coping mechanisms.

Associated actions:

- Establish Service based groups to profile what each service needs in relation to mental health and implement an annual programme of work to address such.
- Provide opportunities for employees to look after their mental wellbeing, for example through physical activity, stress reducing activities and social events.
- Provide systems that encourage predictable working hours, reasonable workloads and flexible working practices where appropriate.
- Establish good two-way communication to ensure staff involvement, particularly during periods of organisational change.
- Promote and support opportunities to enhance professional development, identified through Performance Review & Development (PRD).

(iii) To provide support for employees experiencing mental health difficulties.

Associated actions:

- Ensure individuals suffering from mental health problems are correctly supported and treated fairly and consistently.
- Manage return to work empathetically for those who have experienced mental health problems and in cases of long-term sickness absence, put in place, where possible, a phased return to work.
- Ensure employees are aware of the support that can be offered through occupational health, employee counselling or alternatively their own GP, or a counsellor.
- Treat all matters relating to individual employees and their mental health problems in the strictest confidence and share on a 'need to know' basis only with consent from the individual concerned.

- (iv) **To upskill our managers through appropriate training to enable them to use proactive approaches in reducing instances of poor mental health at work recognising that managers also have a duty to identify and address causes of poor mental health in the workplace before it has a prolonged, adverse effect on employee's health.**

Associated actions:

- Adopt the principles of the HSE Stress Management Standards for employees
- Consult with trade union safety representatives on all proposed action relating to the prevention of poor workplace mental health
- Provide training related to mental health and other associated topics as appropriate with practical tools for managers to use proactively to carry out team health checks
- Equip managers with the skills to manage their teams mental health where remote working is in place
- Provide appropriate signposting for support and advice for managers to use
- Provide confidential counselling and adequate resources.

6. Responsibilities

The Council

- Proactively promote and support positive mental health and wellbeing for all employees
- Equip managers with the necessary training and guidance to appropriately respond to employees presenting with poor mental health and/or confidential disclosures of a mental health diagnosis
- Build a culture that tackles mental health stigma, discrimination and harassment
- Develop a culture that breaks the silence around mental health
- Provide access to a range of appropriate support mechanisms
- Support our managers as they manage employees with mental health concerns.

Managers

- Lead by example, promoting positive working practices
- Undertake appropriate, relevant training to ensure a good understanding of mental health issues and appropriate management practices
- Be understanding, sensitive and available to employees who wish to discuss or disclose information about their mental health
- Understand the early signs of poor mental health. Where there are concerns, discuss with the employee quickly and sensitively to enable the offer of proactive support to be accessed at an early stage
- Empower employees by making them aware of the supports available, including training and development opportunities
- Encourage a culture that prevents stigma, discrimination or harassment around the subject of mental health and to employees who may be struggling with poor mental health
- Provide a safe work environment where employees can discuss mental health, individually or in teams

- Include mental health as a topic on 1 to 1's
- Undertake regular team mental health checks
- Support employees before, during and after returning to work following a period of absence due to poor mental health.

Employees

- Be aware of their own mental health and wellbeing, and how to stay healthy
- Recognise the importance of mental health and wellbeing and its impact on resilience
- Support a culture where mental wellbeing is valued and promoted and where mental health stigma, discrimination or harassment linked to mental health is not tolerated
- Support their colleagues when they want to discuss their own mental health concerns
- If concerned about their mental health, speak to their line manager, The employee relations team within People & Organisational Development, trade union or employee forum representative.

7. Communication

All employees will be made aware of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the support available.

Regular updates will be provided to all employees through communications and the use of Work Well NL.

8. Review and monitoring

The strategy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis.

Name of group: Council Mental Health & Wellbeing

Title: Terms of reference 20/4/22

Purpose / role of the group:

- Align the groups work with the guiding framework for the Council's workforce mental health & wellbeing strategy:
 - National Mental Health & Wellbeing Strategy
 - Lanarkshire Mental Health & Wellbeing Strategy & Plan for NL
 - NLC Workforce Mental Health & Wellbeing Strategy

- Progress the overall Mental Health & Wellbeing Delivery Plan.

- Reporting back to stakeholders on progress and achievements.

Membership (this list is not exhaustive and will be adapted to suit):

Lead – Safety & Wellbeing Manger

ER Officer

TOD Advisor

HR Business Partner

Corporate Communications Representative

Education Support Officer

Service Representative – Chief Executives

Service Representative – Education & Families

Service Representative – Enterprise & Communities

Service Representative – Adult Health & Social Care

Representative from Active & Creative Communities

Representative covering financial inclusion

Representative covering Equalities

Representative covering Suicide Prevention

Representative covering Stigma Free/Community Boards

Trade Union Representatives

Accountability:

- Service representatives to report into the Council group planned activity within their service, share best practice, discuss initiatives that could be used in other services.
- Annual report to CMT updating on work that has been achieved.

Review:

- The Council group will review the work that has been undertaken, its effectiveness and plans on an annual basis with input from all service based groups.

Working methods / ways of working:

- Service based groups will be formed in each of the Council Services.
- Each service based group will look at aligning with national and local mental health and wellbeing strategies whilst profiling the needs of their service.
- All members of the Council group will participate in mental health and wellbeing training available within the Council eg. stigma free, stress toolkit.
- The Health & Social Care Partnership will be included within the Adult Health & Social Care Service based group with information initiatives etc travelling in both directions.
- The national wellbeing champions group led by the Scottish Government will feed into the Adult Health & Social Care Service based group with a representative from this service attending the meetings.
- Best practice from SPDS groups will feed into the group for consistency with other Local Authorities.
- Wellbeing work carried out by the Council safety & wellbeing team will feed into the Council mental health & wellbeing group.

Meetings

- Meetings will be held quarterly and will be held virtually or face to face.
- The meetings will be organised and chaired by the lead for the group.
- Papers for the group will be circulated in advance of any meeting.
- Guests may be invited to the group meeting to cover relevant topics, this will be agreed by the group in advance of any meeting attendance.

Sharing of information and resources (including confidential materials)

- A teams channel will be created for the group to share information and resources.
- The dedicated space on Work Well NL will be used for everyone to access mental health and wellbeing information at any time.

Name of group: Service Mental Health & Wellbeing Group

Title: Terms of reference 05/05/22

Purpose / role of the group:

- Align the groups work with the guiding framework for the Council's workforce mental health & wellbeing strategy:
 - National Mental Health & Wellbeing Strategy
 - Lanarkshire Mental Health & Wellbeing Strategy & Plan for NL
 - NLC Workforce Mental Health & Wellbeing Strategy

- Profile each Services individual needs to identify and create an annual plan of activity. The service group will take account of absence reasons to assist in planning targeted activity.

- Create and progress an annual Mental Health & Wellbeing Delivery Plan for the Service

- Report back to Service stakeholders on progress and achievements via SMT's.

Membership (this list is not exhaustive and will be adapted to suit the needs of each group):

Lead – Nominated by Head(s) of Service

Nominated Service representatives – 1 per division

Safety & Wellbeing Assistant

ER Advisor (absence)

HR Business Partner

Trade Union Representatives as appropriate to the Service

Dignity at Work Service Representative

Diversity Champion (where appropriate)

Wellbeing champion (where appropriate)

Within AH&SC – the existing HSP membership will be fully incorporated

Accountability:

- Service group lead will report into the Council group planned activity within their service, share best practice, discuss initiatives that could be used in other services.
- Service group lead will report back to the Council group relevant information for the annual report which will go to CMT as well as providing a service specific report to the relevant Service SMT on the progress and activity that has taken place.

Review:

- The Service group will review the work that has been undertaken, its effectiveness and plans on an annual basis.

Working methods / ways of working:

- Each service based group will look at aligning with national and local mental health and wellbeing strategies whilst profiling the needs of their service.
- All members of Service based groups will participate in mental health and wellbeing training available within the Council eg. stigma free, stress toolkit.
- The Adult Health & Social Care Service based group will incorporate the existing Health & Social Care Partnership mental health group and will have a representative attending the national wellbeing champions group led by the Scottish Government.
- The service group will link to the prevention of violent incident groups.
- Service groups will link in to wellbeing work carried out by the Council safety & wellbeing team.

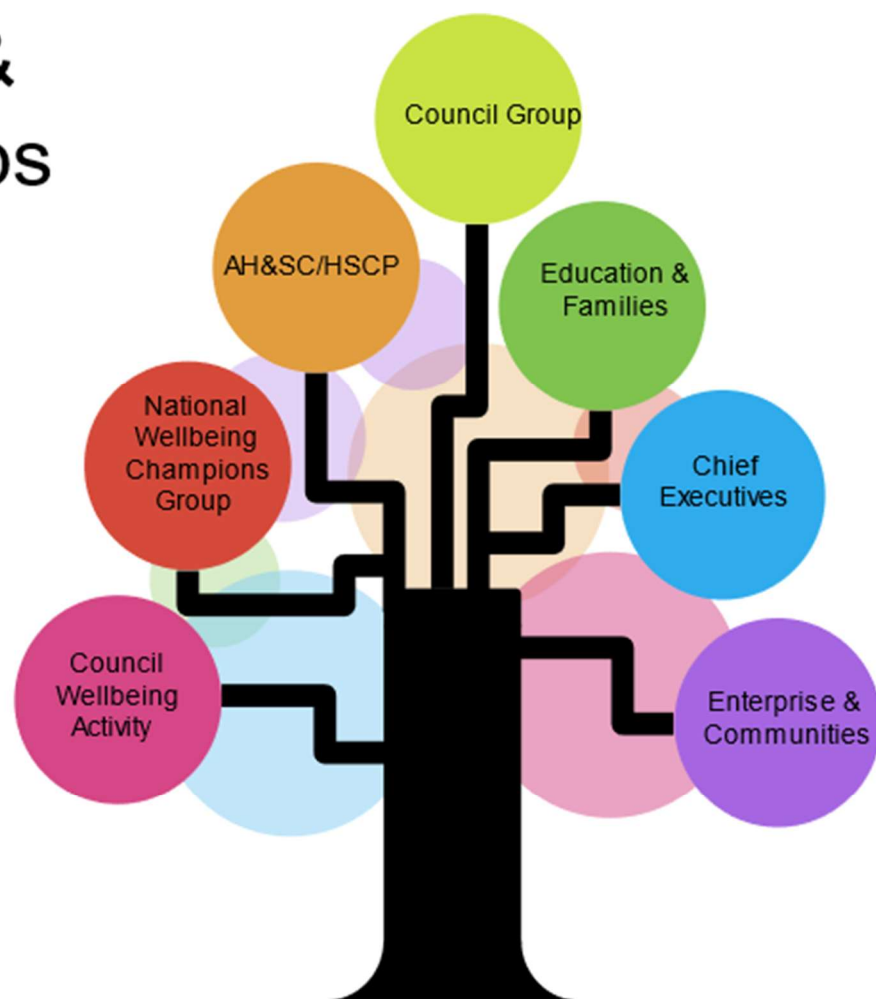
Meetings

- Meetings will be held bi monthly and will be held virtually or face to face.
- The meetings will be organised and chaired by the lead for the group.
- Papers for the group will be circulated in advance of any meeting.

Sharing of information and resources (including confidential materials)

- A teams channel will be created by the lead of each Service group to share information and resources.
- The dedicated space on Work Well NL will be used for everyone to access mental health and wellbeing information at any time.

Mental Health & Wellbeing Groups



All groups feed into the overall Council Group