

**EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE**  
**4 FEBRUARY 2016**

**MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE RESOURCES**

**Purpose of Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to update the Employment Committee on the impact of the Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training programme and mental health first aiders in the workplace.

**Background**

2. Mental health problems are common, but many people feel unconfident in talking about them and unsure on how to offer support to colleagues/staff in the workplace. As reported to the Employment Committee on 22 October 2015 the Council has a comparatively low level (compared to other County Councils) of absence due to stress/depression, mental health, with the figure of 6.54% reported in Quarter 2. It is of course possible that in some cases, other reasons are being given for sickness absence, thus in part masking the problem. However maintaining and improving mental health is a significant component of our work on employee health and wellbeing, which in turn contributes to the effective performance and attendance management.
3. In order to address some of these issues, Leicestershire County Council Learning and Development Service introduced the MHFA training programme in April 2012. This programme consists of a two day 'Mental Health First Aid Standard' course and, since May 2015, a half-day 'Mental Health First Aid Lite' course.
4. MHFA is a nationally recognised accredited training programme overseen by a Community Interest Company. The training supports delegates to identify the signs that someone may be becoming mentally unwell and to provide immediate help on a first aid basis until specialist mental health support is accessed.
5. A pool of trained instructors from departments within the Council is used to deliver the programme.
6. The Mental Health First Aid training programme is open to all staff within the Council. Initially the course was targeted predominantly at managers. The target audience has since expanded in order to focus on a broader spread of people, recognising that anyone in the workplace can support people with mental ill health in the workplace.

Attendance on the programme is as follows (April 2012 – September 2015):

Department	MHFA Standard	MHFA Lite	Total	As % of Department
Adults and Communities	315	20	335	12
Chief Executive's	19	0	19	6
Environment and Transport	66	1	67	7
Corporate Resources	80	6	86	4
Children and Family Services	72	16	88	6
Public Health	5	0	5	7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>557</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>8% of all County Council staff</b>

### **Review and Evaluation of the Impact of MHFA Training**

7. As part our commitment to support the health and wellbeing of our staff, reduce sickness absence and our drive for continuous improvement, a second review and evaluation process of MHFA training has been completed. This followed an initial review which was presented to the Employment Committee on 23 October 2013.
8. This second review involved key stakeholders from Learning and Development, HR, Health, Safety and Wellbeing and Adult Mental Health Services. Drawing upon the three main areas set out below to assess the efficacy of the programme, identifying any improvements required:-

#### Impact of MHFA

9. This was assessed through two methods: analysis of the impact evaluation data from MHFA courses collected by Learning and Development on a rolling basis as standard, and a survey carried out that was sent out to all past delegates of MHFA since 2012.
10. The analysis of the impact data collected as part of each course showed that attendees:
  - 63% feel more confident in spotting the early signs of a mental health problem;
  - 82% feel more confident in helping someone who is experiencing a problem;
  - 92% feel more confidence in providing help on a first aid basis;

- 86% feel more confident in helping to prevent someone hurting themselves or others.
11. The qualitative data received from attendees is very positive, emphasising increased confidence and a desire to embed the learning into the workplace.
  12. The online survey was sent out in August 2015 to all 570 people who had attended a MHFA training course since 2012. A total of 135 responses were received, which gave a 24% response rate. The survey was identical to the one that was circulated in 2013 enabling benchmark data to be compared. The results were similar, demonstrating that the learning is being embedded and that MHFA is continuing to be used throughout the Council.

Key findings of the survey were:

- 91% of people who had attended said they had used the skills they learned to help someone, 83% on more than one occasion;
- In terms of applying the skills in the workplace, 61% had helped a colleague; 34% helped someone they managed and 25% helped a service user or a customer;
- Examples of use of skills in the workplace include “making an occupational health referral”, “as part of a stress risk assessment” and “during a dignity at work hearing”;
- People who had attended used their skills to help manage sickness: 18% said they helped someone who was not at work to return; 29% said they supported someone to stay in work rather than go off sick; 58% said they had supported the person to access professional help.

#### Visibility of the Programme and Awareness of MHFA's

13. This was assessed in order to assure that the learning from the programme was being embedded in practice, and that all staff were aware of the mental health first aid skills available in their teams and departments. As a result, new resources have been developed and made available on CIS for people to share their learning once they have attended a MHFA course. These include posters for those who are trained to put in their area/office to show they are trained and have resources that they are ready to share, badges to identify MHFA trained staff, a discussion exercises for trained staff to use in teams to share their learning, and names of staff trained are held by the Wellbeing Champions.

#### Analyse and Increase Attendance

14. This was assessed in order to assure that the programme is being accessed by staff in all departments, thereby increasing the availability of MHFA as a resource to support the health and wellbeing of staff. A communications plan was drawn up and carried out in April/May 2015, which resulted in increased publicity on CIS, posters in public places, and information in Managers Digest. As a result staff members from all departments have attended the programme, with an increase in bookings from Children and Family Services, Corporate Resources and Environment and Transport – departments that had previously been under-represented.

15. The MHFA Lite course was also launched as part of this Communications Plan. This half-day course was added to the offer of programmes available following feedback that many people would like to attend the full MHFA programme but found the time commitment of two days prohibitive.

### **Future Plans for MHFA Programme**

16. The Learning and Development Service are seeking to continuously make improvements and are taking action on specific issues identified through impact evaluation. For example, a suggestion was received regarding “the need to set up forums of trained individuals to discuss and keep the subject alive”. As a result of this, Learning and Development will be running ‘drop in’ sessions for people who have attended the course, with the first session in December 2015. Future sessions will be held both in County Hall and in other localities. The aim of these drop-ins is to provide a ‘refresher’ for delegates and an opportunity for the Learning and Development Service to capture how trained staff are using the skills they gained on the course. They will also raise the profile of the programme and will be open to staff who have not previously completed MHFA or MHFA Lite to give them an opportunity to sign up to attend.
17. Following the Council’s approach to MHFA and supporting the mental health and wellbeing of its staff, the decision was made by the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Mental Health Partnership (chaired by the Department of Public Health and including Leicester City Council, Leicestershire Police, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and Districts), to use the MHFA across the partnership organisations, using the Leicestershire County Council model as the vehicle for raising awareness, skills and confidence throughout partner organisations. The Partnership Board is also engaging De Montfort University to undertake a study of the first year’s implementation of MHFA across different organisations, with the aim of exploring and evidencing the benefits of delivering MHFA to multi-agency groups. The innovative multi-agency forum is ground breaking in that it is delivering MHFA to a wide range of organisations through one consistent, partnership approach.

### **Recommendations**

18. The Employment Committee is asked to:-
- (a) Note the content of the report;
  - (b) Support the continued implementation and further development of MHFA;
  - (c) Receive further evaluation feedback based upon the continued delivery and evaluation of MHFA.

### **Background Papers:**

Report to Employment Committee titled ‘Mental Health First Aid’, 23 October 2013  
<http://ow.ly/XmmFg>

### **Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedures**

None.

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**Equality and Human Rights Implications**

19. There are no equality issues arising from this development.