

Wellbeing strategy 2018-2023



1.0 Introduction

Leicestershire County Council is committed to creating a working environment which is both safe and fosters the best possible health and wellbeing for all our employees. Our goal is to become a work place where employees are encouraged and enabled to make healthy lifestyle choices to improve their wellbeing both inside and outside of work.

This Wellbeing strategy has been formed to establish the Council's commitment to ensuring effective wellbeing management and risk control within the authority. This strategy applies to all services and staff within the Council and should be read in accordance with Section 4.0 of the corporate Occupational Health and Safety Management System.

As an organisation we recognise that our staff are our greatest assets and as such we will provide a range of opportunities, interventions and support to staff, to drive the development of a happy, healthy and motivated workforce.

Overall, we want Leicestershire County Council to be a place where:

- Staff feel safe and secure.
- The working environment is a positive one, which promotes both a healthy body and mind.
- Staff are treated fairly and appropriately regardless of age, gender or gender identity, ethnic origin, disability, sexual orientation, religion, ability, job role or work patterns.

In return, we expect staff to take responsibility for maintaining and improving their own health and wellbeing, to take advantage of learning and development activity and wellbeing opportunities and to actively seek support where appropriate.

This strategy contains information about key health and wellbeing topics and how the county council aims to promote positive health and wellbeing to our employees.

Health, Safety and Wellbeing is everyone's responsibility, and through the implementation of this strategy, we are seeking broad commitment from all managers.



2.0 Management priorities for action

In relation to this strategy the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Team aims to ensure a safe working environment for all and to improve the health and wellbeing of staff.

We also endeavour to reduce the number of accident / ill health reports, and drive down the level of work related absence. As well as being the right thing to do, there is strong evidence that supporting the health and wellbeing of staff can achieve a range of positive outcomes such as;

- enhanced performance
- staff retention and lower levels of sickness absence
- organisational success through more productive and motivated staff

To help us achieve this aim we have created a number of core priorities in relation to health and wellbeing management. These are:

- Implement and maintain an occupational health and safety management system compliant with the requirements of OHSAS 18001 to ensure a consistent approach to health and safety across the authority.
- Promote and ensure management engagement and ownership of health and safety through education, awareness and improved communication, engagement and information sharing.
- Promote a sensible and proportionate approach to risk management through improving the risk assessment and risk control process.
- Ensure a quality, value for money HS&W service for all staff and external customers.
- Promote a positive culture of health and wellbeing and to lead by example for our staff and our communities.

3.0 Workplace wellbeing champions

As part of the Council's drive towards a healthier workforce the council has recruited a number of volunteer Workplace wellbeing champions.

The role of the Workplace wellbeing champions is to coordinate and promote wellbeing initiatives within their own department area.

The council may call upon the assistance of the champions and in return the council will value and support the champions and recognise their role in helping to meet the aims and objectives of this strategy.



4.0 Legislative and policy support

The county council recognises its legal responsibility to support employee wellbeing at work. The council is committed to complying with the legislation listed below;

- Health and Safety at Work Act (1974)
- Human Rights Act (1998)
- Data Protection Act (1998)
- Disability Act (2001)
- Disability Discrimination Act (2005)
- Equality Act (2010)

People Services (HR, Learning and Development and Health, Safety and Wellbeing) have created a number of policies and procedures to ensure the council is compliant with the above legislation. These policies have been written with the needs of the employee at the centre, the council recognises that employees who are happy and well at work will perform at their best.

- **Smarter working policy and guidance** supports employees with being more flexible about where, when they work and how space and technology can be used to find new and more effective ways of doing things. This type of working can help reduce costs, improve productivity, as well as supporting the wellbeing of employees and helping them to develop a better work life balance.
- **Planned leave.** Employees can make use of their leave entitlements in the form of annual leave, maternity/paternity leave. Other paid leave entitlements are available in certain circumstances.
- **Sickness absence.** Leicestershire County Council want to ensure employees are supported as they return to work from sickness, the HR Attendance management policy and procedure provides information to managers about how best to support employees returning to work.
- **Behaviour in the Workplace Policy.** Behaviour in the workplace is taken seriously at Leicestershire County Council, Behaviour in the Workplace policy sets out what constitutes unacceptable behaviour including bullying, harassment and victimisation all of which are not tolerated at the county council. The policy sets out what actions should be taken if this sort of behaviour is witnessed.
- **Smoking Guidance** explains the restrictions around smoking at work; the guidance also identifies stop smoking services which are available.
- **Substance misuse policy and guidance** is available to provide a framework to enable alcohol and drugs misuse by employees to be recognised by managers and handled in an appropriate, fair and consistent manner whilst taking into account individual circumstances.

- The Health, Safety and Wellbeing **Challenging Behaviour and Violence at Work guidance** recognises that employees may come across challenging or violent behaviour while at work, the document identifies a managers responsibility to, as far as is reasonably practicable, to eliminate or reduce the risk of violence and aggression to employees during their working day.
- **Management of Stress in the workplace,** People services have created guidance to help managers to support employees dealing with stress. We recognise that stress can come in all different forms and individuals deal with stressful situations in different ways, and the council will support all employees if they are experiencing stress at work.

Many other policies and guidance documents are available to download from our intranet.

For further information about the implementation of these polices and guidance documents please contact the relevant department.



5.0 Occupational health

The County Council has a duty of care to make sure that you are healthy at work. We have a contract with Health Management, an external occupational health provider that gives advice on a case by case basis about how to manage employee's health conditions at work.

Occupational Health's role in promoting wellbeing includes;

- Monitoring employees health
- Helping to identify health problems and fitness for work issues at an early stage
- Formulating return to work strategies
- Promoting wellbeing
- Conducting health surveillance to detect work related illness or diseases.



6.0 Employee groups

Within Leicestershire County Council there are a number of support groups for employees to join, these groups support employees to feel integrated and supported at work.

They include:

- **Black workers' group (BWG)** for all black workers regardless of grade. The group meet to discuss strategies to improve the BWG profile across the authority.
Contact: bwg@leics.gov.uk or visit the group's [intranet page](#).
- **Disabled Workers' Group (DWG)** is for all staff with a disability, regardless of grade. The group aims to contribute to and consult on council policies and practices that affect disabled staff and service users and help empower employees with disabilities and promote self-development and independence.
Contact: dwg@leics.gov.uk or visit the group's [intranet page](#).
- **The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans + (LGBT+) staff network** is for all LGBT staff of any grade. The 'plus' includes those who identify themselves as another sexual orientation or gender, such as asexual, pansexual or intersex. The group aims to support the council to be an inclusive and fair employer of LGBT+ staff.
Contact: lgbt@leics.gov.uk or visit the group's [intranet page](#).



7.0 Sport groups and physical activity

It is commonly known that regular physical activity has many benefits to the body and our mental wellbeing, including the following;

- Regular exercise can reduce your risk of major illnesses, such as heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and cancer by up to 50% and lower your risk of early death by up to 30%.
- People who do regular activity have a lower risk of many chronic diseases, such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke, and some cancers.
- Exercise can also boost self-esteem, mood, sleep quality and energy, as well as reducing your risk of stress, depression, dementia and Alzheimer's disease.

Leicestershire County Council recognises these benefits and encourages staff to lead a healthy, balanced lifestyle which incorporates regular exercise. The council have facilities, clubs and initiatives available for staff to use to help incorporate exercises into their lives.

Some of the clubs/activities available to staff are detailed below.

- **Golf society** - monthly competitions are held from May to September.
- **County Surveyors Cricket Club (E&T)** - the Club plays non-league matches on Tuesday evenings.
- **County Officers Cricket Club** - The club plays competitive friendly cricket matches at weekends in Leicester, Leicestershire and occasionally further afield. The club is open to all employees and their immediate families. New players are always welcome.
- **County Hall runners** - the club welcomes runners of all abilities. On the last Wednesday of each month they also run a 5km handicap race.
- **County Hall tennis club** - Club night is Mondays from 5.30pm all year round, under floodlights in winter. Men's team play in the Leicestershire Summer and Winter League. New members are always welcome with potential to form women's and mixed teams. Courts are available for hire at other times, email propertyhelpdesk@leics.gov.uk to enquire.
- **County Hall table tennis club** - Newfoundpool WMC (Formerly County Hall Table Tennis Club) currently enters two teams in the Leicestershire and District League. They play at Newfoundpool Working Men's Club on Beatrice Road, Leicester.
- **Ellis Park football club** - One team that plays in the Hinckley and District League on Sunday mornings. Matches start at 10.30am.
- **Badminton (Croft)** - Tuesday and Thursday lunch times.

The latest contact details for those clubs can be found on the intranet - search for 'Sports.

Building walking or cycling into daily routines are the most effective ways to sustainably increase physical activity. Physical activity is therefore one of four priority groups set up by the Workplace Health & Wellbeing Strategy Group. The group will develop an action plan to increase staff levels of physical activity and in particular support and encourage active travel to and from work. County Hall has a range of facilities to support active travel including changing and showering facilities and safe bicycle storage. In addition you can borrow a bike from County Hall for business trips, lunchtime rides, and overnight, both for leisure use and to try commuting by bike. To find out more, check availability, or to book your bike, contact ETDCentralAdmin@leics.gov.uk or visit the page on the [intranet](#).

Council employees can also receive discounted gym memberships via the Wider Wallet scheme. For more information please visit the relevant intranet page. <https://leics.sharepoint.com/sites/intranet/HDI/Pages/Apply-for-employee-discounts-and-benefits.aspx>

The action plan will also consider how to increase physical activity at the workplace including using stairs rather than lifts and explore greater use of standing desks and walking meetings.

The other priority groups developing action plans are:

- Workplace healthy eating and facilities
- Smoking, alcohol and substance misuse, and
- Mental health and emotional wellbeing group



8.0 Healthy eating

To maintain a healthy lifestyle it is important that we eat a healthy, balanced diet. Eating healthy, nutritional food and avoiding overeating foods that are high in saturated fat, salt and refined sugar has many benefits, including;

- Reducing the risk of developing heart disease and high blood pressure
- Reducing the chance of getting cancer
- Helping to maintain a healthy weight and BMI
- Improve the condition of your skin, nails and hair
- Improve your energy levels
- Improve your mental wellbeing.
- Avoiding feeling sluggish or bloated.

We encourage employees to eat a healthy diet to ensure that they are performing at their best while they are at work. Staying hydrated throughout

the day is very important to avoid headaches and lapses in concentration.

A number of healthy options are available to purchase in the County Hall food-court and restaurant, including soups, access to a salad bar, fresh fruit and healthy pre-packaged snacks.

For those employees who want a little extra help to lose weight or maintain a healthy diet and lifestyle the 'Shape up Club' is available to provide top tips and a confidential weigh in service.

The club runs weekly at County Hall every Thursday morning between 08:30 and 10:30. Staff do not need to attend the full session, typically 15 - 20 minutes attendance is necessary. To book, or to find out more, email Helen Childs on hchilds@virginmedia.com.

Other areas being considered for the action plan include:

- Awareness raising - provide messages and resources about healthy eating and the health benefits of eating healthily.
- Create a healthy workplace environment that

supports employees in making the healthy food choice the easy choice – by ensuring healthy choices are available to all employees across all LCC sites. This should include a review of vending machine contracts, and exploring opportunities for growing fruit and vegetables.

9.0 Smoking, alcohol and substance misuse support

Smoking causes about 90% of lung cancers. It also causes cancer in many other parts of the body, including the:

- mouth
- lips
- throat
- voice box (larynx)
- oesophagus
- bladder
- kidney
- liver
- stomach
- pancreas

It also has many other negative affects including;

- Making your blood thicker, and increasing the chances of clot formation.
- Increase your blood pressure and heart rate, making your heart work harder than normal.
- Narrowing your arteries, reducing the amount of oxygen rich blood circulating to your organs.

Leicestershire County Council recognises these negative effects from smoking and encourages

staff not to smoke. However the council understands that some employees choose to smoke, these employees must abide by the relevant policy as there are some restrictions as to where and when employees can smoke.

For those employees that want to quit smoking support is available.

Public Health has a support service 'Quit Ready' which employees can access for support to quit smoking. They offer a tailored stop smoking programme which is non-judgemental, confidential and free. Employees are encouraged to visit the website www.quitready.co.uk/about/ for further information.

The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Service also offer stop smoking support sessions to employees who wish to give up smoking. Employees may attend one support programme during paid time. Attendance is subject to operational needs, employees will therefore need to ensure that prior agreement has been sought from their manager.

For further information regarding the stop smoking sessions facilitated by the Council, please contact

the health, Safety and Wellbeing team or view the [smoking guidance](#).

Employees misusing alcohol or other harmful substances will be supported at Leicestershire County Council to deal with their addiction. Managers are encouraged to support their employees who have a problem with alcohol or substance misuse, the corporate policy is available on the intranet to guide managers when supporting employees who are struggling with a harmful addiction.

Leicestershire County Council encourages employees who think they may have a problem with [alcohol or substance misuse](#) to contact their doctor, the Counselling and Wellbeing Service and / or other support organisation for help.

The following websites/organisations are endorsed by the council to access support.

[Alcohol units and guidelines - NHS Change for Life](#)
[Drugs and drug abuse – NHS Live well](#)
[Turning Point – Drug and Alcohol Support](#)

10.0 Mental wellbeing

Taking care of your own mental health and wellbeing is extremely important to perform well at work and maintain a healthy life.

The council is committed to tackling the stigma around mental illness and making 'getting help' easily available and confidential.

The measures identified above, around physical activities and healthy living, are preventative measures to encourage staff to live a positive and healthy lifestyle which in turn improves mental wellbeing. However, if employees find themselves in a crisis and require assistance there are several options for help within Leicestershire County Council.

- Mental Health First Aiders - many members of staff within Leicestershire County Council have been trained to become Mental Health First Aiders (MHFA). The role of MHFAs is to identify, understand and help a person who may be developing a mental health issue. If you think you may have a mental health problem or would like to talk to someone confidentially contact your nearest MHFA.
- Mindfulness sessions are available for staff to book onto during lunchtimes. The sessions cover, breathing and muscle relaxation technique, awareness of negative thinking, mindfulness eating and listening to nature sounds, mindfulness practice. For more information about the sessions please contact the Health, Safety and Wellbeing team or look out for dates on the intranet.
- Singing for Fun group - every fortnight the singing for fun group meet at the Pavilion to get together to sing popular classics and songs from musicals. It doesn't matter what your singing ability is, the aim of the class is to have fun to boost your mood and wellbeing. Dates are published on the council's intranet events section.
- Employee Wellbeing Service - As part of the corporate Health, Safety and Wellbeing Service all LCC employees can access the employee wellbeing service. The service offers access to confidential counselling and wellbeing advice. The service operates both via management and self-referral. For more information about the service or to arrange an appointment please email counsellingandwellbeing@leics.gov.uk, or to speak to a trained counsellor on the phone please call 0116 305 7386.
- Crisis support - If you or one of your colleagues are in a crisis situation there are external organisations available for support. Please see the organisations below for further information.
 - [Anxiety UK](#) – Charity providing support if you have been diagnosed with anxiety. Phone: 08444 775 774
 - [Bipolar UK](#) – Charity helping people living with manic depression or bipolar disorder
 - [CALM](#) – Campaign Against Living Miserably, for men aged 15-35
 - [Depression Alliance](#) – Charity for sufferers of depression
 - [MIND](#) – Promotes the views and needs of people with mental health problems.
 - [No Panic](#) – Voluntary charity offering support for sufferers of panic attacks and OCD.
 - [Samaritans](#) – Confidential support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair. Phone: 116 123

HR and Health, Safety and Wellbeing Service are available to provide managers and employees support around **stress management**.

11.0 Personal and physical health

The council recognise that employee's physical health may, in certain circumstances, be adversely affected at work. To mitigate against these risk, and fulfil the council's duty of care, a number of health care benefits are available to staff.

- **Access to a free eye test.**

While there is no medical evidence to show that use of computers causes any permanent damage to eyes or eyesight, free eye tests are provided to employees who regularly use computers.

Leicestershire County Council have a contract with Vision Express whereby an employee can receive;

- A free eye test including digital retinal photography
- Pair of single vision glasses from Vision Express's £39 range free of charge
- £45 discount towards glasses
- £45 discount towards a reglaze of existing frames with new lenses

The £45 discount can be used towards prescription glasses or lenses of any prescription, whether this is for reading vision or long-distance vision and includes single vision, bifocal or varifocal lenses.

A voucher can be downloaded via the [Intranet](#).

- **Flu jabs** – County Council employees are eligible for a free flu jab on the National Health Service (NHS) if they in any of the following 'at risk' groups:
 - Aged over 65
 - Clinically at risk – e.g. have a long term condition such as asthma, diabetes, Heart disease, or a weakened immune system
 - Pregnant
 - A carer in receipt of a carer's allowance, or the main carer for an older or disabled person
 - Frontline health and social care staff member working with vulnerable people can also get a free flu vaccination through Leicestershire County Council.
- **'Check your numbers day'**- The Environment and Transport department arrange a number of health events throughout the year via the occupational health provider.

12.0 Economic wellbeing

It is recognised that financial pressure can have a huge impact on wellbeing; employees who are experiencing financial problems may become stressed or anxious at work.

The Council has introduced various schemes to help support employees with their finances.

The Wider Wallet scheme gives employees access to a range of national and local offers and salary sacrifice schemes. Including;

- Saving money at high-street stores
- Discounts on your supermarket shopping
- Special offers on leisure activities and gym memberships
- Online discounts
- Discounted gift vouchers

Additionally the 'Workplace Bikes' salary sacrifice scheme is available to employees to make cycling to work easier by hiring a bike and accessories up to the value of £1,000.

The scheme allows eEmployees to lease / purchase a bike over 18 months and make tax and National Insurance savings on the deductions from your salary.



13.0 Key performance indicators

In order to ensure that this strategy can be measured for effectiveness, the HS&W Team have established a number of key performance indicators these are (based on 2016– 17 data):

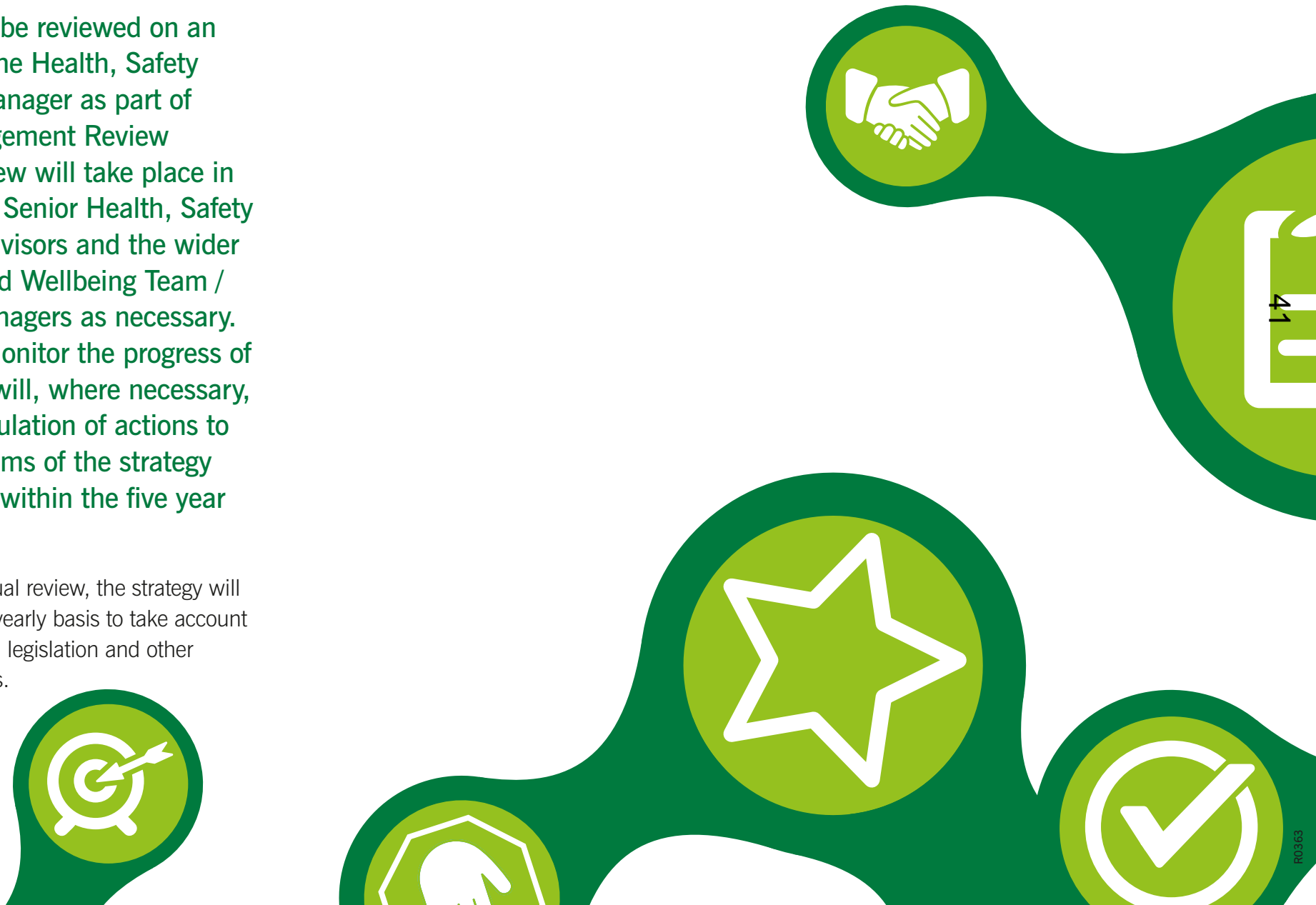
- 10% reduction in the number of employees being referred to occupational health with mental health issues.
- 30% increase in attendance of Stress Management Training.
- Reduced sickness absences rates, target of less than 7.5 days per employee.
- Increased visibility of mental health first aiders.
- Increase in healthy food options in the canteen.
- Promote the importance of physical exercise in managing mental wellbeing.



14.0 Strategy review

This strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager as part of the formal Management Review process. The review will take place in consultation with Senior Health, Safety and Wellbeing Advisors and the wider Health, Safety and Wellbeing Team / departmental managers as necessary. The review will monitor the progress of the strategy and will, where necessary, assist in the formulation of actions to ensure that the aims of the strategy are implemented within the five year timeframe.

In addition to the annual review, the strategy will be rewritten on a five yearly basis to take account of potential changes in legislation and other organisational changes.



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