

**Bolsover District Council**

**Safety Committee**

**7th November 2016**

**Employee Assistance Programme**

**Report of the Joint Assistant Director Human Resources and Payroll**

This report is public

**Purpose of the Report**

- To inform Safety Committee that SAMT agreed to the introduction of an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) across both BDC and NEDDC as part of the commitment to improving employee health and well-being and to potentially assist in reducing sickness absence.

**1 Report Details**

- 1.1 An EAP is an employee benefit programme offered by many employers. They are intended to help employees deal with personal problems that might adversely impact their work performance, health and well-being.
- 1.2 An EAP is a cost-effective way to provide employees with access to a wide range of services confidentially over the telephone and/or on-line. Typically these services would include:
- Legal information
  - Financial advice
  - Comprehensive telephone help-lines available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, for issues such as relationships, domestic abuse/violence, elderly care, gambling addiction etc
  - Structured Counselling (via telephone)
  - Critical incident advice
  - GP call back and Medical information
  - Employment advice
  - On-line Health Assessments
  - On-line Stress Coaching tool
- 1.3 A Telephone Assistance package as outlined above would normally cost between £2.50 and £4.00 per employee depending upon provider.
- 1.4 An EAP is often positioned as a highly valued employee benefit that promotes wellbeing and a strong work/life balance but is proven to:
- Reduce absence – 34% reduction on average (CBI Absence survey)
  - Improve productivity in the work place

- Reduce stress in employees
- Improve staff retention
- Demonstrates a caring approach towards employees
- Great value to the organisation – a return of £14 for every £1 invested (CBI Absence survey)

## **2 Conclusions and Reasons for Recommendation**

- 2.1 Employees are integral to the success of any organisation, but maintaining a healthy and productive workforce can often be problematic, time consuming and costly.
- 2.2 EAP's can:
- Help employees deal with work and life demands that can affect performance
  - Tackle stress and support mental health problems
  - Assist HR and management to identify and resolve workplace issues
  - Reduce absence costs.
- 2.3 There has been a slight increase in stress and mental health related illnesses this past year (2015/16) within the Council's and both the Trade Unions and Members have highlighted their concerns about this trend, particularly in the light of recent and on-going organisational changes.
- 2.4 Whilst we have evidence that the majority of stress related illnesses are not specifically work related, as a good employer, we should be looking at ways to support employees in maintaining their own health and well-being.
- 2.6 For a relatively small financial outlay, introducing an EAP demonstrates to employees our commitment to their health and well being and demonstrates to Members and Trade Unions that we have listened to concerns raised during absence management reporting through various forums.
- 2.7 Having an EAP in place during any organisational change is a resource that could be utilised to support employees during periods of change and is a proactive approach (there before an issue becomes a problem), rather than a reactive approach (a referral to Occupational Health or Counselling once a problem has been identified).
- 2.8 A successful EAP programme should result in increased attendance and morale, decreased turnover and employee relations disputes, and a work force that feels valued. All of these benefits in turn lead to increased productivity.

## **3 Consultation and Equality Impact**

- 3.1 None arising from this report.

## **4 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection**

- 4.1 The alternative is not to offer an Employee Assistance Programme.

## **5 Implications**

### **5.1 Finance and Risk Implications**

The cost will be approximately £1200 per annum. This cost will be met from the Occupational Health budget.

5.2 As part of any package, there is also an on-line facility which staff can access at any time to get information on a range of issues.

5.3 Promotional material can be downloaded from the website and this will be used to promote the service to employees. If we download the information from the website, there is no cost to the organisation. An initial promotion has been placed on payslips and information will be attached to payslips in October/November. Regular reminders will be given throughout the year.

### **5.2 Legal Implications including Data Protection**

No legal implications arising specifically from this report.

The management reporting arrangements are generally based on the number of employees accessing particular services for each Council, and can be split down by Directorate if requested. Individual employees are not identified.

### **5.3 Human Resources Implications**

These are covered in the report in terms of the employee health and well-being agenda and reducing sickness absence.

## **6 Recommendations**

6.1 That the Safety Committee note the contents of the report and the decision made by SAMT to introduce an Employee Assistance Programme at BDC.

## **7 Decision Information**

<b>Is the decision a Key Decision?</b> (A Key Decision is one which results in income or expenditure to the Council of £50,000 or more or which has a significant impact on two or more District wards)	No
<b>District Wards Affected</b>	
<b>Links to Corporate Plan priorities or Policy Framework</b>	Transforming our Organisation

**8 Document Information**

Appendix No	Title
<b>Background Papers</b> (These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below. If the report is going to Cabinet (NEDDC) or Executive (BDC) you must provide copies of the background papers)	
Report Author	Contact Number
Stephanie Barker	7009

Report Reference –