

CORPORATE AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 23 NOVEMBER 2023

WORCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S WORKPLACE MENOPAUSE SUPPORT PROGRAMME

Summary

1. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Corporate Services and Communication and the Strategic Director of Commercial and Change have been invited to the meeting to update the Panel on developments relating to Worcestershire County Council's (the Council) Workplace Menopause Support Programme.

Background

2. The health and wellbeing of the workforce is set out as one of the Council's top priorities in its Workforce Strategy 2021-2024.
3. The Wellbeing Needs Analysis 2022 and workforce feedback regarding the delivery of a diverse health and wellbeing agenda highlighted the organisational need for support for the menopause.
4. This was further supported by:
 - [House of Commons Menopause and the workplace survey results Fourth Special Report of Session 2021–22](#)
 - [CIPD Report 'The Menopause and the Workplace'](#)
 - [CIPD, The menopause at work: guidance for people professionals.](#)
5. There is also a legal compliance case, as there has been a significant rise in the number of employment tribunals that involve the treatment of workers going through the menopause.
6. A number of documents, referenced in paragraph 3 and 4, informed the Council's proposals, along with assessment of the existing workplace support and policy framework and the results of the menopause questionnaire – April 2022. A report outlining the Council's proposal was considered by the Chief Officer in November 2021.
7. The Workplace Menopause Support Programme was launched in April 2023, as a 2-year programme, with three main objectives:
 1. Create an open, inclusive and supportive culture for menopause
 2. Develop a framework to manage menopause in workplace
 3. Promote good people management including awareness training and management of health and sickness absence.

8. From the outset, it was a priority for the programme to:
 - Include all employees, irrespective of gender or identity, and provide relevant resources to everyone within the organisation
 - Be accessible to everyone, with on-demand resources available at any time and a level of longevity built in the materials for new employees joining the Council
 - Be delivered in a sustainable way, complimenting wider health and wellbeing provisions.
9. Low/no cost principles were applied to funding requirements, focusing on maximising internal resources, furthering the existing relationships with local health and wellbeing providers and sharing knowledge and resources within the NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board (HWICB).
10. A number of initiatives and support mechanisms were considered and critically assessed, resulting in the action plan, as follows:
 1. Create an open, inclusive and supportive culture for menopause
 - a. Appointment of a senior sponsor for the Menopause Programme
 - b. Development of leaders' and managers' knowledge and understanding and to consider the organisational and individual needs concerning management of menopause transition in the workplace
 - c. Creating a menopause-oriented communications plan.
 2. Develop a framework to manage menopause in workplace
 - a. 12-month programme of menopause awareness talks delivered by a medically trained menopause specialist
 - b. Introduction of regular peer-to-peer support events across the organisation both face to face and online
 - c. Development of employee support network and linking it with the existing Yammer group
 - d. Review of existing policies and procedures with focus on menopause support (incl. performance management, absence management, flexible working policy, local workwear guidance etc.)
 - e. Development of Wellbeing Hub inclusive of useful resources and signposting.
 3. Promote good people management incl. awareness training and management of health and sickness absence
 - a. Development and facilitation of a regular and ongoing menopause training for management
 - b. Development of management menopause support guidance document.
11. Research suggests consideration of a formally outlined support for those affected by menopause symptoms such as a menopause policy. An assessment of the existing framework of workplace support was made and it was recommended to incorporate the menopause support through the existing policy and procedures framework, as opposed to introducing a standalone menopause policy. It was also

considered important not to single out menopause in a way of a specific policy provision.

12. Consideration was also given to provision of menopause clinics facilitated by medical professionals, setting up a menopause champions network, amongst others. Those were deemed as options for future considerations, approximately 12 months into the programme, if considered valuable, based on workforce feedback and wellbeing needs identified.
13. Participation is monitored on an ongoing basis with reports produced periodically. An evaluation of the programme was carried out in August 2023 reviewing the initial 4-months of the programme. Based on the findings a recommendation was taken forward to continue with the programme, whilst making some adjustments, as outlined.
14. October 2023 marked 6 months of the Workplace Menopause Support Programme. At present, Officers are gathering quantitative data (menopause questionnaire – October 2023) and qualitative data (Stories of difference) to evaluate the impact of the programme, evidence the value it provides and gather feedback for future development of the workplace support. A further report with recommendations and next steps will be considered by the Council's Chief Officer Group and the Strategic Leadership Team.

Legal, Financial, and HR Implications

15. There are positive implications for Legal and HR.
16. From a Legal perspective, there is positive impact in terms of mitigation of litigation risk. From a HR perspective positive impact on individual and collective health and wellbeing, resulting in a healthier more productive workforce and reduced absence levels. It also impacts positively on employee engagement and retention rates.
17. In respect of the financial implications, the Workplace Menopause Support Programme is delivered on no/low cost basis.
18. Due to lack of suitable internal resources capable and qualified to deliver a 12-month programme of menopause awareness talks delivered by a medically trained menopause specialist, this activity is externally facilitated.
19. The total cost of this is £3,640 for the 12-month externally delivered programme. This includes 12 different menopause focussed topics, each delivered in three ways: virtually, in person and uploaded to on-demand resources as a pre-recording.

Equality and Diversity Implications

20. An Equality Impact Assessment is being completed to identify impact and any necessary mitigating actions.

Purpose of the Meeting

21. The Panel is asked to:

- consider and comment on the information provided in this report and supporting documents
- determine whether any further information or scrutiny on a particular topic is required; and
- agree any comments to highlight to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility.

Contact Points

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance), there are no background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

[All agendas and minutes are available on the Council's website here.](#)