

SUBJECT: BETTER HEALTH AT WORK AWARD – ACHIEVEMENT OF BRONZE AWARD.

REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to outline for Members details of the Better Health at Work Award scheme.
- 1.2 In January 2010 the Authority's Occupational Health Unit committed to undertaking the Better Health at Work Bronze Award.
- 1.3 The award is a North East regional scheme to encourage employers to improve the health of their employees. The award also recognises the achievements of the organisation in managing health at work.
- 1.4 There are three levels to the award, Bronze, Silver and Gold with appropriate criteria to be met at each annual stage. The award is supported by regional public health specialists at all levels.
- 1.5 The Chief Fire Officer is pleased to report that Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority were successful in gaining the Better Health at Work Bronze Award.
- 1.6 The award will be presented at a ceremony to be held at Gateshead College on 26 February 2011.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The aims of the Better Health at Work Award were:
 - Support improvements in health and well being for North East workers and employers
 - Create an inclusive, standardised framework within the region.
 - Compliment existing, local workplace health schemes
 - Give regional recognition to those workplaces which actively promote the health of their employees.
 - Share good practice and promote the contribution workplace health can make to a healthy community.
- 2.2 Promoting a healthy workplace has considerable benefits to employers possibly leading to reduced absenteeism, enhanced productivity and improved performance.
- 2.3 The financial cost to businesses from ill health should not be underestimated. Figures from the 2008 Annual Absence survey carried out by the Chartered

PREVENTING PROTECTING RESPONDING

Institute for Personnel and Development indicate that workplace absence costs the average employer £666 per employee.

- 2.4 Stress and other mental health issues along with obesity are major causes of ill health and sickness absence. Sickness absence costs the UK economy an estimated £12.7 billion each year while the HSE estimate that stress in the workplace costs businesses £3.8 billion per year.

3 SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 To achieve the Bronze award the Authority were required to produce evidence for eleven criteria consisting of fifty two standards.

- 3.2 The bronze level was related to basic awareness of workplace health and included the Following areas:

- a health needs assessment
- management commitment to health improvement in the work place
- promoting health issues in a simple format e.g. leaflets
- mechanisms for consulting staff on health issues and promoting healthy eating options
- general awareness of how health can be affected by work activity
- support for mental health and well being in the work place.

- 3.3 In order to achieve the award the following activities were undertaken:

- The Occupational Health staff asked for volunteer Health Champions from all Authority locations to assist in the administration of the Health Promotion topics. All locations nominated volunteers and the role proved to be successful in delivering the same standard of information across the service.
- Bespoke advertising was commissioned from the Authority's Media Resource Unit to promote the award and produce health promotion material.
- The production, issue and analysis of a Health Needs Analysis to all TWFRS staff to determine the current levels of health and activity.
- Three Health Promotion campaigns were identified from the analysis, namely Back Pain, Healthy Eating and Exercise.
- Each campaign ran for a six week period and consisted of information on the OHU intranet site, posters and literature for all locations and larger displays in the Service HQ breakout areas. A full evaluation of the campaigns was then carried out.

4 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The award recognises that the Authority have a strong commitment to the health and wellbeing of the workforce.

- 4.2 Health Promotion has always been a function of the Authority and it is anticipated that the activities undertaken in pursuit of the award will continue to be an aspect of the Authority's work.
- 4.3 By committing to health promotion the Authority will continue to support the following outcomes
- Improved workplace health
 - Improved corporate image
 - Increased productivity
 - Improved staff moral and loyalty
 - Reduced absenteeism
 - Reduced staff turnover
 - Networking with other partners
 - Assistance in legislative compliance

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are recommended to:

- a) Note that the Fire and Rescue Authority has been awarded the Better Health at Work Award Bronze Award.
- b) Offer congratulations to all personnel concerned within the Authority for this achievement
- c) Receive further reports as appropriate.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- North East Better Health at Work Award – Employers Guidelines
- Better Health, Fairer Health, A Strategy for 21st Century Health & Wellbeing in the North East of England (February 2008.) www.phne.org.uk
- Working for a Healthier Tomorrow. Dame Carroll Black DWP 2008
- TWFRS Health Needs Assessment report 2010
- Health Promotion Participant Survey 2010

