

TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Item No 7

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE: 13 OCTOBER 2014

SUBJECT: THE MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGE

**JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER, THE CLERK TO THE
AUTHORITY, THE FINANCE OFFICER AND THE PERSONNEL ADVISOR TO THE
AUTHORITY**

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is for Members to be advised of the Local Authority Mental Health Challenge and the potential to appoint a 'mental health champion' across the Authority to compliment the great work undertaken by the Occupational Health Unit.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Mental Health Challenge was set up by Centre for Mental Health, Mental Health Foundation, Mind, Rethink Mental Illness, Royal College of Psychiatrists and YoungMinds.
- 2.2 The Challenge is funded by the Department of Health through the Mental Health Strategic Partnership.
- 2.3 Local authorities have a key role in implementing the mental health strategy and improving mental health in their communities. The challenge was set up to support and encourage local authorities to take a proactive approach to this crucial issue

3 MENTAL HEALTH FACTS

- 3.1 1 in 6 people will experience a mental health problem in any given year.
- 3.2 The World Health Organisation predicts that depression will be the second most common health condition worldwide by 2020.
- 3.3 Mental ill health costs some £105 billion each year in England alone.

- 3.4 People with a severe mental illness die up to 20 years younger than their peers in the UK.
- 3.5 There is often a circular relationship between mental health and issues such as housing, employment, family problems or debt.

4 SUPPORT FROM NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

- 4.1 National mental health organisations will support local authorities that take on the challenge by:

Providing resources (for example published evidence, expert opinion and briefings) to help authorities to take local action in support of the strategy.

Offering networking opportunities and peer support for mental health champions, including an annual meeting and through use of electronic media.

Recognising and acknowledging publicly the authorities that sign up to the challenge and the 'champions' they appoint.

5 THE MEMBER CHAMPION

- 5.1 Enthusiasm and commitment are more important than formal position in becoming a member champion. What is crucial is that an elected member takes on this role in order to influence the full range of the Authority's activities and responsibilities.

- 5.2 The role of champion will be defined locally but key activities might include:

Raising awareness of mental health issues in the development of Authority policies and strategies, and in public forums;

Leading discussions on mental health issues with NHS organisations in the local area;

Speaking with schools, businesses and community groups about mental health;

Linking with mental health service users and voluntary groups locally to understand their needs and concerns;

Tackling myths and misperceptions about mental health in the local community.



6 PROPOSAL

6.1 Currently the Mental Health Challenge is open to councils to take part however, this may exclude Fire Authorities. Officers are holding a series of exploratory discussions with Mental Health Challenge to determine whether the Authority can participate in the programme or can run a complementary scheme that mirrors the approach undertaken by the Mental Health Challenge.

6.2 In the interim members may wish to agree in principle that a mental health member champion is considered to support the valuable work the Occupational Health Unit provides in this regard.

7 LEGISLATIVE IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no legislative implications associated with this report as it complies with current employment law and good practice.

8 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no additional financial implications.

9 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no equality and fairness implications in respect of this report.

10 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no health and safety implications in respect of this report.

11 RECOMMENDATIONS

11.1 Members are recommended to:

- a) Approve in principle the proposal detailed in section 6.1 of this report;
 - b) Receive further reports as appropriate.
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