

SUNDERLAND HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

11 December 2020

HEALTHY ECONOMY UPDATE: WORKPLACE HEALTH**Report of the Healthy Economy Working Group****1.0 Purpose of the Report**

1.1 Healthy Economy is one of the Board's eight priorities and the Healthy Economy Working Group is developing a programme of activity that will tackle:

- Workplace health - employers' role in improving employee's health
- Healthy labour-force - the health of those in work and seeking work
- Employment in the health and social care sector - understanding and tackling recruitment issues and wider workforce opportunities.

1.2 This report is to raise awareness of the Workplace Health Alliance Charter and the Mental Health at Work commitment to allow discussion on ways the Board can support the recommendations proposed in section 7.

1.3 Covid-19 has had significant impact on workplaces. Many workplaces have had to close, others have placed staff on furlough whilst most have changed working cultures and behaviours very quickly. Paying attention to workplace health has never been more important and as businesses aim to adapt to the "new norm", it is essential city leaders keep workplace health at the forefront for a healthy economy.

2.0 Background

2.1 The Healthy Economy Working Group recognises the important role of employers in the city in influencing a range of outcomes – both in terms of direct action on health and action other agendas, such as maximising social value (i.e. considering economic, social and environmental wellbeing), that in turn influence health. This is acknowledged in the City Plan, the draft Healthy City Plan and other key strategies, such as the Community Wealth Building Strategy. The Community Wealth Building Strategy identifies the role of anchor organisations and key stakeholders in building community wealth through a range of areas including fair employment practices, local procurement and much more. The Healthy Economy priority of the HWBB is a relatively new strand of work that has not been pursued in the past by partners and provides great potential for change in our city.

2.2 Although the focus is broader than workplace health, this work strand is at an advanced stage of development due to the fact that that the council's Public Health team have overseen it for a number of years. A report was provided in March 2020 to the Board on the progress of the working group at which the Workplace Health action plan was provided and approved. Development of the two other work strands (set out in section 1.1) continues and an update about their direction of travel will follow to a future meeting.

3.0 Benefits of Improved Workplace Health

- 3.1 The government's command paper *Improving lives: the future of work, health and disability* (2017) is committed over a period of 10 years to reducing health inequalities by promoting good work as a determinant of good health and advocates employers to proactively include and enable people with ill health and/or disability to access and stay in work.
- 3.2 Workplace health is about promoting and managing the health and wellbeing of staff. Workplace health interventions are activities undertaken within the workplace by an employer or others, to address any health issues staff face and action to address health and safety risks.
- 3.3 Good employment that promotes the health of employees can reduce sickness absence; improve morale, increase productivity and performance. From an employer's perspective, the benefits of a healthy workforce are clear, healthy staff are more productive, take less time off sick and do not necessarily need to retire early. However, an unhealthy workforce negatively impacts our economy and society due to lost productivity, presenteeism, reduction in income tax receipts, increases in long-term sickness, informal care giving and increased healthcare costs. Looking at the wider economy, combined costs from worklessness and sickness absence amount to over £100bn annually, so there's a strong economic case for action which ultimately benefits employee health and in turn, has a positive impact on businesses and local economies.
- 3.4 Evidence shows that employers that invest in appropriate workplace health initiatives to support the health and wellbeing of their employees have the potential to see a significant return on investment, which typically ranges from £2 to £34 for every £1 spent.
- 3.5 The overarching aim of the 'Workplace Health' work strand is to raise the profile of health and wellbeing in the workplace which will result in business benefits such as reduced sickness absence, improved staff morale, and increased productivity and performance.

The key objectives of this work strand are:

- Supporting evidence-based local healthy workplace schemes which encourage employer-led workplace health activity
 - Leadership buy in to workplace health from the HWBB and City Board
 - Establishing a baseline of health and wellbeing needs of businesses through the use of health needs assessments
 - Developing the knowledge and skills and building the capacity of upper and middle tier management through a menu of opportunities, via which they can facilitate change as a health and wellbeing ambassador within their workplaces
 - Build intelligence for future workplace health initiatives in Sunderland.
- 3.6 The action plan for this work strand includes two significant programmes through which these objectives are to be achieved - the North East Better Health at Work Awards and Sunderland Workplace Health Alliance. The plan also requires the

Board to take forward a number of actions itself in order to advance workplace health across the city and demonstrate leadership in this area.

4.0 North East Better Health at Work Award

4.1 The Better Health at Work Award (BHAWA) recognises the efforts of local employers in addressing health issues within the workplace. It is endorsed by Public Health England as an exemplar of good practice. The award scheme is free, flexible and open to all employers.

4.2 For those organisations that already promote healthy lifestyles and consider the health of their employees, the Award recognises their achievements and helps them move forward in a supported way via a structured and tiered approach to workplace health.

4.3 The Award has five levels, each with appropriate criteria to support the compilation of an Award Portfolio. These are summarised as follows:

- Bronze - lays a firm foundation to build a healthier workplace;
- Silver - builds upon the basics of the Bronze level and rewards organisations that take a more holistic view of the workplace;
- Gold - builds upon the Silver level and requires companies to look outside their own organisation and promote health within the wider community;
- Continuing Excellence - recognises the importance of organisations sustaining the progress they have made during their participation in the award and encourages them to use their experience to support others.
- Ambassador status – recognises the exemplar role of an organisation which is used as a role model to other business as an outstanding employer supporting health and wellbeing.

4.4 Sunderland currently has 38 businesses on the BHAWA (Appendix 1). The health interventions carried out by these businesses reaches a total of 22,924 employees.

4.5 Regionally there are only three Local Authorities who have reached the highest level of the Award and given Ambassador status. Sunderland City Council is one of them. There are three Sunderland based organisations who have reached this status, they are Sunderland City Council, Sunderland College and Pentland Brands (formerly Berghaus).

5.0 Workplace Health Alliance and Alliance Charter

5.1 Sunderland Workplace Health Alliance is a network of local businesses (Appendix 2) which aims to work collaboratively to improve health and wellbeing within Sunderland workplaces. The purpose is to engage with a wider range of workplaces than just those participating in the Better Health at Work Award. Whilst the Award is popular, many organisations that are committed to improving workplace health do not wish to undertake the process of building the portfolio of evidence that is required for the Award.

5.2 For those organisations that have not previously considered promoting health or struggle to promote health at work, the Alliance provides collective support to improve health within the workplace including increased access to health information and

health interventions - which can provide early identification of health problems and access to health services where required. The Alliance has a steering group and a two-year action plan (2020/22), this encompasses leadership, communication and marketing, building capacity, addressing behaviour change and promoting prevention.

- 5.3 During 2018/2019, Public Health and the council's Business Investment Team began working together to raise positive awareness among businesses of the support available to improve the health of their workforce. A particular focus was to target private sector Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) who despite employing the majority of people in the city were not accessing support in the same way as large companies, education bodies and the public sector. There are any number of reasons for this, but they're thought to centre on a lack of resources in SMEs, particularly the absence of a dedicated HR function. HR is traditionally the team seen by business leaders as best equipped not just to lead on engagement with the public and voluntary bodies who deliver workplace health support, but also to manage its subsequent roll out within the business.
- 5.4 As a result of this, our messaging to SMEs was refined to emphasise the 'easy in easy out' nature of support via the Alliance, and eight new SMEs have joined as a result. We continue to work hard to deepen their engagement with the group and further refine the service offering for the benefit of them as well as future SME members.
- 5.5 During 2019/2020, following engagement with workplaces there has been high interest from Sunderland businesses to join the Sunderland Workplace Health Alliance resulting in a significant increase as shown in table 1 below.

Table 1:
Number of individuals and workplaces who have become members of the Sunderland WPH Alliance between 2018 and 2019



- 5.6 With over 90 workplaces on the Workplace Health Alliance, each member will have different reasons in their attendance, but the Alliance expects to measure its impact. General attendance of Alliance meetings is a step forward to address workplace health challenges and the achieved learning will reach many thousand employees across the city. However, to support members on a granular level and provide bespoke intervention which includes training and onsite support, the Alliance asks members to demonstrate their commitment to workplace health by formally signing up to the Sunderland Workplace Health Alliance Charter (see Appendix 3). As part of this the member receives:

- One to one support to identify the key health and wellbeing challenges faced by the organisation and staff
- Bespoke support, tools and techniques to help address challenges successfully
- Capacity building training and workshops to better equip the business and its staff to meet health and wellbeing challenges arising in the future

5.7 The Board is asked to support the Sunderland Workplace HealthAlliance Charter by committing to it on an individual organisational level and discuss ways wider city leaders and anchor organisations can be encouraged to support it.

6.0 Mental Health at Work Commitment

6.1 One in six workers experience problems such as anxiety, low mood and stress at work. The Stevenson/Farmer review (2017), Thriving at Work, highlighted that an estimated 300,000 people lose their jobs each year due to mental ill health. This has knock on impacts for society and the economy.

6.2 Analysis by Deloitte (2020) shows that there is a demonstrable cost to employers and investing in supporting mental health at work is good for business and productivity. Poor mental health costs the UK economy between £74 billion and £99 billion a year, because employers are less productive, less effective, or off sick.

6.3 Given the impact of Covid-19, paying attention to workplace mental health is ever more important and workplaces need to be more proactive rather than reactive. It is to be expected that mental health issues within the workplace will continue to rise over the coming months.

6.4 Surveys with Sunderland workplaces in 2019 and 2020 highlighted Mental Health to be the key contributing factor to sickness, presentism and absence and the need for employers to start looking more closely at the crucial role they play in supporting the wellbeing of their staff.

6.5 As part of World Mental Health Day 2020, the Sunderland Workplace Health Alliance launched its mental health at work commitment campaign encouraging business leaders to sign up. The Mental Health at Work Commitment has been developed with the knowledge and expertise of mental health charities, leading employers and trade organisations.

6.6 The Commitment provides a framework for employers who recognise the importance of promoting staff wellbeing. This framework sets out six clear standards based on what best practice has shown is needed to make a difference and better equip employers to create an environment where employees can thrive. These six standards are:

1. Prioritise mental health in the workplace by developing and delivering a systematic programme of activity
2. Proactively ensure work design and organisational culture drive positive mental health outcomes
3. Promote an open culture around mental health
4. Increase organisational confidence and capability
5. Provide mental health tools and support

6. Increase transparency and accountability through internal and external reporting

6.7 Employers who sign the commitment will lead the way in implementing each standard for their employees. Along with each standard are ideas to get employers thinking and tools to get started—all aiming to make it easier for organisations big and small to implement each standard and drive change.

6.8 Knowing the challenges of health inequalities in Sunderland and given the impact of Covid-19, it is to be expected that health issues within Sunderland workplace will rise and continue to rise over the months ahead. Many people face uncertainties surrounding their job, people have been furloughed, suffered financially or had a major change to their usual working arrangement, such as working from home rather than an office. Any one factor, or a combination, of these things can lead to health issues which employers may need to support their employees with.

7.0 Recommendations

7.1 The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to:

- Consider the role of anchor organisations in improving health and wellbeing and reducing health inequalities by using the Social Value Act (2013) to embed workplace health in all commissioning and procurement resulting in wider social, economic and environmental benefits.
- Support a focus on engaging local SMEs in the workplace health agenda.
- Endorse support for the Sunderland Workplace Health Alliance Charter on a Board and an individual organisational level.
- Endorse support to the Mental Health at Work Commitment and as individual organisations sign up to the commitment.
- Encourage partner organisations to participate in the Better Health at Work Award, ideally starting this process in 2021.

Appendix 1 - Better Health at Work Award Businesses

Company	Number of Employees
Adient Seating UK Ltd	273
Asset 55 Ltd.	17
Barbara Priestman Academy	72
Barclays	1800
Clearly Drinks	107
Direct Business Solutions	53
DWP – Visiting	25
DWP Debt Centre Washington	527
DWP Wearview House	700
EDF Energy	972
Fast Flow	242
Foundation of Light	140
Gentoo	1114
Grundfos Manufacturing Ltd	134
Hays Travel	458
Hillary's Blinds	481
HMRC PCS ULR - Signpost to Learning	3500
Kasai UK Ltd	312
Npower	2301
Oxclose Community Nursery School	16
Pentland Brands	101
Pentland Distribution	81
Portland Academy	94
South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust	8306
Springboard	79
Stagecoach Sunderland	305
Sunderland Carers Centre	27
Sunderland CCG	155
Sunderland City Council	4279
Sunderland College (Education Partnership NE)	718
Sunderland Job Centre	156
Together for Children	820
TSB	446
Tritility	60
University of Sunderland	1333
Vantec Europe Ltd.	873
Washington Mind	22
WISE Academies	203

Appendix 2 – Sunderland Workplace Health Alliance members

Adient	NE BIC
Age UK (Essence Service)	NE Counselling
All Together Better	NECCA
Anchor	North East Counselling Service
Asda Warehouse Washington	Newcastle College
Asset FiftyFive	
Bae Systems	NICE Network
Barclays	Nike
Be Wellbeing	Nissan
Pentland Brands (Formerly Berghaus)	Npower
Body Confidence	NTL World
Broadway Junior School	CNTW NHS FT
Calsonic Kansei	Ocado
Sunderland CCG	Our Minds Work
Changing Lives	Oxclose Nursery
Cirrus Environmental	Pioneering Care Partnership
South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust	Penshaw View
Clearly Drinks	Pentland
Crystal Care	Posture Team
Digital Furniture	Public Health England
Durham Police	Ride Electric Bike
DWP Debt Centre Washington	RNIB
DWP Wearview House	DWP Job Centre Plus
EDF	Rocket Medical
Everyone Active	Saggezza
Fast Flow	Sunderland City Council
Federation of Small Businesses	Hetton School
Forget me Knot Wellbeing CIC	Simon West Interiors
Foundation of Light	Snop
Gambling Counselling Services (GCS) Partners	South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust
Gentoo	Specialist Stop Smoking Service
Gestamp	Springboard
Go Smarter Travel	Station Taxis
Grace House	Sunderland Care & Support
Groundwork NE	Sunderland Carers
Grundfos	Sunderland College
Hays Travel	Sunderland Counselling
Healing Sunderland	Sunderland Headlight
HMRC Signpost to Learning	Sunderland Mind
Hyperdrive	Sunderland Software City
Impact North east	Sunderland University
Impeller	The Chamber
Inflo Software	Together for Children
Ingeus	Tombola
International Community Organisation of Sunderland	Training in Care

Kasai Group	Tritility
Knight Frank	RISE (Previously Tyne and Wear Sport)
Leighton	UK Independent Medical
Liebherr	Uplift Associates
Lighthouse Therapy Group	Vantec
Lorraine Reid	VCAS
Medintu	Washington Mind
Melanoma Me	WISE Academies
Mental Health Matters	MINTH
MICC Ltd	Moving On Tyne and Wear (MOTW)
NAC Group	
Those highlighted are also part of the North East Better Health at Work Award programme	

Appendix 3 - Workplace Health Charter



Sunderland Workplace Health Alliance
Sunderland City Council – Public
Health
Burdon Road
Sunderland
SR2 7DN
Tel: 0191 5611976

Hello

Signing the Sunderland Workplace Health Alliance Charter

As a key organisation in Sunderland you already know that looking after the health of your workforce is good for them and good for you, making a huge difference to your organisation's productivity, profitability and staff morale.

Workplace health policies and interventions are activities undertaken by employers to address key health and wellbeing issues faced by staff and employers. Evidence shows that investing in appropriate workplace health initiatives has the potential to deliver a significant return on investment, which typically ranges from £2 to £34 for every £1 spent. Universal wellness programmes can be expected to show a financial return over two to three years, whereas more targeted interventions are likely to show a quicker return on investment.

We're asking all Sunderland workplaces to demonstrate their commitment to workplace health by formally signing up to the Workplace Health Alliance Charter. The benefits are support from Sunderland City Council's Workplace Health team to work with you to improve the health and wellbeing of your staff, making you an exemplar employer.

As part of this you will receive;

- One to one support to identify the key health and wellbeing challenges faced by your organisation and staff
- Bespoke support, tools and techniques to help you address challenges successfully
- Capacity building training and workshops to better equip you and your staff to meet health and wellbeing challenges arising in the future

I invite you to sign up to the Workplace Health Charter to improve the health and wellbeing of your employees. If there are any queries prior to sign up please contact the Workplace Alliance on 0191 561 1976 or WorkplaceHealth@sunderland.gov.uk.

I look forward working with you on this important matter.

Ralph Saelzer
Chair – Sunderland Workplace Health Alliance
Manging Director - Liebherr-Sunderland Works Ltd

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Sunderland
City Council

The logo for Sunderland City Council, featuring a stylized blue and white circular emblem to the right of the text.



SUNDERLAND WORKPLACE HEALTH CHARTER

We will work to improve the health and wellbeing of our employees by:

- **Identifying a named health advocate in the organisation, and once a year, establish for internal use, the key health issues effecting staff and the organisation**
- **Create an annual plan setting out your priorities for workplace health policies and interventions**
- **Commit to creating a healthy workplace environment**
- **Provide health information and support to staff**
- **Actively contribute to meetings of the Sunderland Workplace Health Alliance**
- **Take part in networking, best practice and information sharing with other companies in Sunderland**

I/we agree to an assessment of workplace health by a Workplace Health Co-ordinator working in partnership with a health advocate from within my organisation.

I will allow access to relevant information on a confidential basis to the Workplace Health Coordinator who will support us.

I agree to the use of non-confidential information and photographs to publicise good practice.

Signed

Print Name

Company

Position

(e.g. Owner/CEO/Senior Manager)

Date