

**BETTER HEALTH AT WORK AND THE DRIVE FOR WELLBEING IN THE WORKPLACE**

**Report of the Executive Director of Public Health and Integrated Commissioning**

**1.0 Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 This report is to provide an update to the HWB Scrutiny Committee on:
- a. the Better Health at Work Award (BHAWA) in Sunderland;
  - b. the work being carried out across the city to raise awareness of the Sunderland Workplace Health Alliance; and
  - c. the Sunderland Workplace Health Model, and seeks the committees endorsement of the model.

**2.0 Background**

- 2.1 Good quality employment is a known factor of good health and wellbeing and has a key role to play in the delivery of the Health and Wellbeing Board's (HWB) [Healthy City Plan](#) vision, this being: ***Everyone in Sunderland will have healthy, happy lives, with no one left behind.*** As such, healthy economy is one of the nine workstreams set out in the [Healthy City Plan Implementation Plan](#).
- 2.2 The Healthy City Plan Implementation Plan identifies three key areas for improvement for the healthy economy workstream, these are:
- 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.
- 2.3 The workplace health element of the Healthy Economy workstream is at an advanced stage of development and has been led by the council's Public Health team for several years. This paper will focus on this to highlight its development.
- 2.4 Good quality employment has a key role to play in influencing a range of health-related outcomes – both in terms of direct action on health and action against other agendas that in turn influence health. The inter-dependency between health and employment is acknowledged in a number of city plans: The City Plan, Healthy City Plan and other key strategies, such as the Community Wealth Building Strategy.
- 2.5 Regionally and locally various agendas are focusing on workplace health by considering worklessness, economic impacts on wider determinants, addressing excess claimants of universal credit, skills gaps and the wider impacts of the economy on health. It is acknowledged that better health promote economic growth as people are less likely to die prematurely, so the working-age population will increase. When people are healthier, absences from sickness decline, and workers are less distracted by managing their own conditions or those of their loved ones. Also, fewer workers retire early because of health conditions.

- 2.6 In addition, the Covid-19 economic impact continues to compound existing inequalities. The impact has been felt by all, the greatest burden has been felt by the most disadvantaged in our society. Covid-19 has had significant impact on workplaces with many having to close, others have had staff on furlough for prolonged periods whilst most have had to change working cultures and behaviours very quickly for example working from home.

### **3.0 Benefits of improved Workplace Health**

- 3.1 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.
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 The overarching aim of the 'Workplace Health' priority 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.
- 3.5 The action plan for this priority includes two significant programmes through which these objectives are to be achieved - the North East Better Health at Work Award (BHAWA) and Sunderland Workplace Health Alliance.

### **4.0 The Sunderland Model of Workplace Health**

- 4.1 The Sunderland Model (diagram 1 below) has evolved significantly over the past 2 to 3 years. It has moved away from focusing only on the BHAWA to drive wellbeing in Sunderland workplaces, to ensuring businesses who cannot usually participate in the BHAWA are engaged with opportunities that works for them.
- 4.2 The model has been advocated for business buy in by the Health and Wellbeing Board, City Board, North East Chamber of Commerce, North East Local Enterprise Partnership, Sunderland CCG and by a number of council departments including the Business Investment Team and by those involved in championing community wealth building.
- 4.3 The Sunderland model has received praise by wider regional partners as it's outcomes to drive workplace health and wellbeing across the city have been a success and well received by workplaces as it enables workplaces to take steps based on their own capacity and interest. Some regional areas have started to adopt the Sunderland approach.
- 4.4 For example, as a large anchor organisation Nissan (6200 Employees) attend the Workplace Health Alliance meeting. They began their BHAWA journey in April 2021 and

have done some outstanding work up to the point of their Bronze assessment in November 2021. They've made fantastic progress in developing a health and wellbeing strategy which aims to further engage staff throughout the organisation. They have Health Advocates in key roles within the business who take departmental lead in health and wellbeing with clear support from the Senior Leadership Team.

- 4.5 Another example as a SME called Minth Group (60 employees) who have been members of the Workplace Health Alliance since before the outbreak of COVID. In that time they've engaged with every Alliance meeting. Based on their learning from the Workplace Health Alliance they have recently signed up on the BHAWA. This is proof that engaging businesses at a level that is appropriate can help them to take smaller steps towards the end goal of a BHAWA submission.

**Diagram 1**



## **5.0 North East Better Health at Work Award**

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 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.
- 5.3 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.

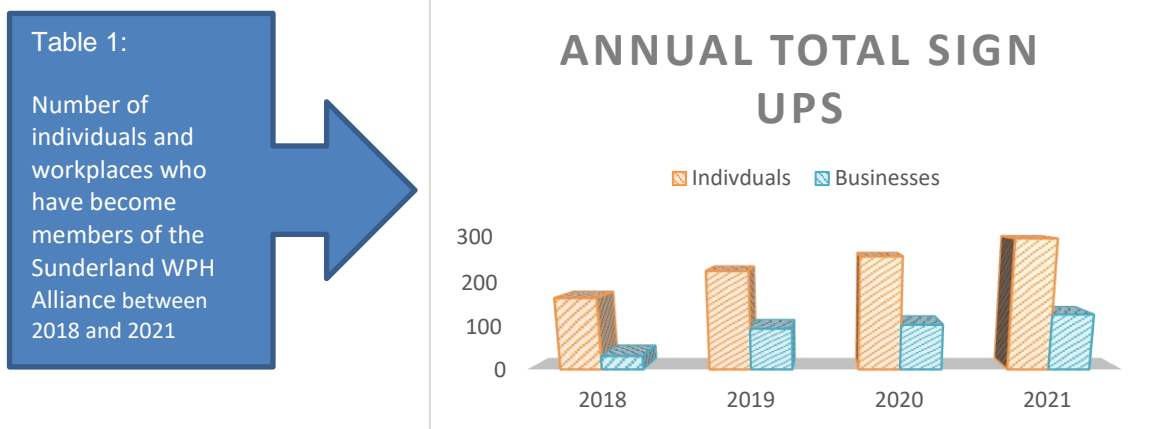
- **Ambassador status** – recognises the exemplar role of an organisation which is used as a role model to other business as an outstanding employer supporting health and wellbeing.

- 5.4 Sunderland currently has 45 businesses on the BHAWA (Appendix 1). The health interventions carried out by these businesses reaches a total of approximately 40,000 employees.
- 5.5 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 four Sunderland based organisations who have reached this status, they are Sunderland City Council, Education Partnership Northeast (Formerly Sunderland College), Pentland Brands (formerly Berghaus) and Gentoo.
- 5.6 The Council ensures the offer of the BHAWA is promoted across Sunderland workplaces and businesses are encouraged to be part of the initiative. When workplaces have registered, they are provided with bespoke support to build capacity amongst key staff who will lead the portfolio from the workplaces. Support is provided with training, strategy setting, practice sharing and delivering interventions onsite. After a period of support the workplaces will be ready to submit their portfolio of evidence which is assessed by the Council and a commissioned provider in line with regional expectations and submitted for verification.

## **6.0 Workplace Health Alliance and Alliance Charter**

- 6.1 Sunderland Workplace Health Alliance is a network led by 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 BHAWA and encourage drive for wellbeing at work. Whilst the BHAWA is popular and has significant impact, many organisations that are committed to improving workplace health may not have the capacity to undertake the process of building the portfolio that is required for the BHAWA - these are mainly Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs). The Council provides the coordination and support for the Alliance.
- 6.2 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 (2021-23).
- 6.3 Since 2018/2019 the council's Public Health and Business Investment teams have been working together to raise awareness amongst businesses of the support available to improve the health of their workforce. A particular focus has been to target private sector Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) who despite employing most people in the city were not accessing support in the same way as large companies, education bodies and the public sector.
- 6.4 As a result of this, messaging to SMEs was refined to emphasise the 'easy in easy out' nature of support via the Alliance, and multiple new SMEs have joined as a result. The council continues to work hard and provide mentorship to deepen their engagement and further refine the service to their needs.

- 6.5 During 2020/21, engagement with workplaces has remained consistent despite a challenging year. The number of businesses and individuals engaging with the alliance continues to rise as shown in table 1 below.



- 6.6 There are over 120 workplaces signed up to the Workplace Health Alliance and each member will have different motivations for participating, but the Alliance expects to measure its impact. There is very good attendance at Alliance meetings, which is helpful to understand and address workplace health challenges by sharing learning and best practice to many thousands of 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. 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

## 7.0 Mental Health at Work Commitment

- 7.1 One in six workers experience problems such as anxiety, low mood, and stress at work. 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.
- 7.2 Given the impact of Covid-19 and knowing the challenges of health inequalities, 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.
- 7.3 Surveys with Sunderland workplaces in 2019 and 2020 highlighted mental health to be the key contributing factor to sickness, presenteeism 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.
- 7.4 As part of World Mental Health Day 2021, the Sunderland Workplace Health Alliance maintained its Mental Health at Work Commitment campaign encouraging workplaces to sign up to the national framework.

- 7.5 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. As of 30<sup>th</sup> October 2021, 26 Sunderland based businesses had signed up to the Mental Health at Work Commitment. The Alliance will continue to promote the benefits of signing up to the Commitment and share some of the work that is being done by supporting organisations.

## **8.0 Future Plans**

- 8.1 The future plans for the BHAWA to keep existing workplaces engaged and inspire Alliance workplaces to register for this. The key targets are:

- To increase sign ups to Bronze level by 5 new businesses annually.
- To have a higher retention rate at Silver and Gold at 60%.
- To continue to raise the profile of the Award in Sunderland to highlight and demonstrate the quality and quantity of work being submitted to others across the region.

- 8.2 The future plans for the Alliance are to maximise the learning for workplace health between large and SME organisations so that SMEs are supported to benefit from anchor organisations. Key activity involves:

- To refine and maintain engagement levels of the Steering Group to increase the effectiveness of what we deliver.
- Move to a hybrid delivery model to incorporate the learning we have from COVID, whilst also encouraging face to face engagement with businesses at events.
- To maintain membership to the Alliance and, more importantly, increase those actively working on the Charter or the BHAWA.
- Collaborate with the Community Wealth Building and Real Living Wage programmes

## **9.0 Recommendations**

- 9.1 The HWB Scrutiny Group is recommended to:

- Accept this report as an update on the Sunderland Better Health at Work Award and the work taking place around wellbeing at work across the city
- Endorse the Sunderland Workplace Health Model (section 4).

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## **Appendix 1 - Better Health at Work Award Businesses**

**\*Missing Data will be submitted in December 2021 or when ready as part of BHAWA submission**

Workplace	Employee Number
Adient Seating UK Ltd	273
Asset 55 Ltd.	17
Barbara Priestman Academy	72
Barclays	1800
Castleview Enterprise Academy	*
Clearly Drinks	107
Direct Business Solutions	53
DWP – Visiting	25
DWP Debt Centre Washington	527
DWP PIP	*
DWP Wearview House	700
EDF Energy	972
Education Partnership NE	718
END. Clothing	*
Fast Flow	242
Foundation of Light	140
Gentoo	1114
Grundfos Manufacturing Ltd	134
Hays Travel	458
Hillary's Blinds	481
Houghton Community Nursery	*
Kasai UK Ltd	312
Mill Hill Nursery	*
Minth Automotive	*
Nissan	6200
Ocado	*
Oxclose Community Nursery School	16
Pentland Brands	101
RBSL	*
Roundel Manufacturing	*
Sandhill View Academy	*
South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust	10306
Springboard	79
Stagecoach Sunderland	305
Sunderland CCG	155
Sunderland City Council	4279
Sunderland Job Centre	156
Together for Children	820
TSB	446
Trinity New Bridge Academy	*
Tritility	60
University of Sunderland	1333
Vantec Europe Ltd.	873
Washington Mind	22
WISE Academies	203

## **Appendix 2 – Sunderland Workplace Health Alliance members**

Adient	North East Counselling Service
Age UK (Essence Service)	Newcastle College
All Together Better	NHS
Anchor Housing	NICE Network
Asda	Nike
Asset55	Nissan
BAE Systems	Npower
Barclays	NTL World
Be Wellbeing	NTW
Pentland Brands (formerly Berghaus)	Ocado
Body Confidence	Oxclose Nursery
Broadway Junior School	PCP
Castleview Academy	Penshaw View
Calsonic Kansei	Pentland Distribution
Sunderland CCG	Posture Team
Changing Lives	Public Health England
Cirrus Environmental	Ride Electric Bike
Clearly Drinks	RNIB
Crystal Care	Rocket Medical
Digital Furniture	Saggezza
Durham Police	Sunderland City Council
DWP (various branches)	Hetton School
EDF Energy	Simon West Interiors
Everyone Active	SNOP
Fast Flow	South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust
Federation of Small Business	Specialist Stop Smoking Service
Forget me Knot Wellbeing CIC	Springboard
Foundation of Light	Station Taxis
GCS Partners	Sunderland Care & Support
Gentoo	Sunderland Carers
Gestamp	Education Partnership North East (formerly Sunderland College)
Go Smarter Travel	Sunderland Counselling
Grace House	Sunderland Headlight
Ground Work	Sunderland Mind
Grundfos	Sunderland Software City
Hays Travel	Sunderland University
Healing Sunderland	The Chamber of Commerce
HMRC	Together for Children
Hyperdrive	Tombola
Impact North east	Training in Care
Impeller	Tritility
Inflo Software	RISE
Ingeus	UK Independent Medical
International Community Organisation of Sunderland	Uplift Associates
Kasai Group	Vantec
Knight Frank	VCAS
Leighton	Washington Mind
Liebherr	WISE Academies
Lighthouse Therapy Group	ZF TRW
Lorraine Reid	Coatsink
Medintu	



Melanoma Me Mental Health Matters MICC Ltd MINTH Moving On Tyne and Wear NAC Group NE BIC NE Counselling NECCA	DBS North East Roundel Kitchens Paragon Collingwood Primark Northumbria University Tyne Counselling End Clothing
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