

Runnymede Borough Council Employee Wellbeing Strategy

June 2023

Contents

Introduction	3
Our Employee Data	3
Aims of the Employee Wellbeing Strategy	6
Promote	6
Provide and Protect	10
Responsibilities within the Employee Wellbeing Strategy.....	11
Further information.....	12

Introduction

Runnymede Borough Council (The Council) recognises the importance of promoting and protecting employee wellbeing.

The Council has a legal duty of care to employees to ensure and promote health at work – as set out in the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. The Council is a diverse organisation, so it is essential that employees from all areas can access the appropriate level of support and resources when and if they need it.

The importance of employee health and wellbeing has become more widely recognised over the past decade. In particular, there is increasing concern about mental health, and the growing pressures people face working and living in today's world.

The workplace can be an effective place to improve the wellbeing of individuals, families and communities. It can offer financial security, social connections, and a sense of belonging, meaning and purpose. Our employees spend a significant amount of time at work, so we have a key role to play in the wellbeing of our workforce.

Employee wellbeing is important to business performance. A healthy workplace, that promotes a state of contentment, benefits both employees and the organisation.

“Fostering employee wellbeing is good for people and the organisation.
Promoting wellbeing can help prevent stress and create positive working
environments where individuals and organisations can thrive”
– CIPD: Wellbeing at Work 2020

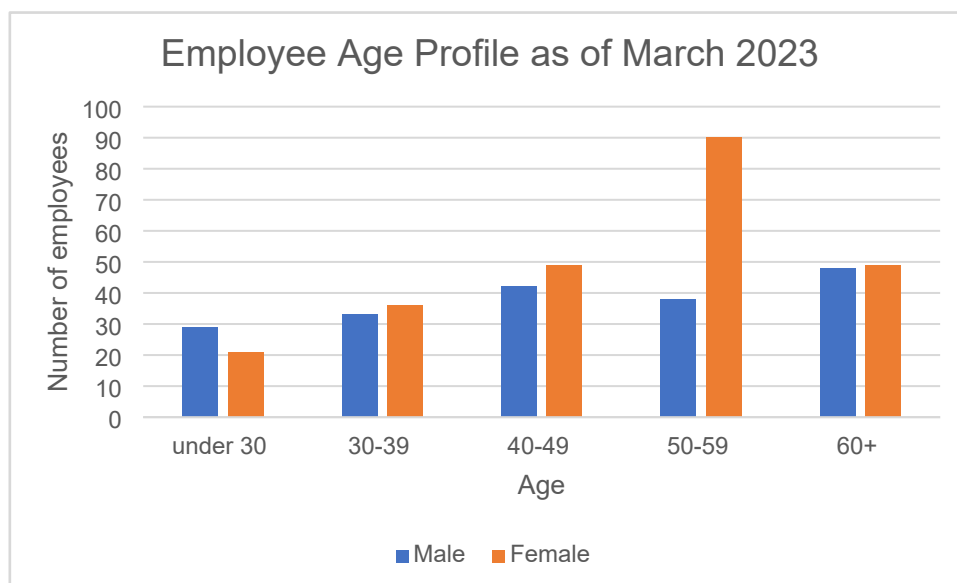
Our Employee Data

The Council currently has approximately 435 employees and provides a diverse set of services across 11 areas.

The majority of the office workforce are designated as Agile Workers (working normally 3 days a week from a Council location and 2 days from home) with a percentage of workers being classed as Fixed Workers, (those who attend work in person for all of their working week. These include services such as Customer Services, Community Centres, CCTV).

Around 12% of the workforce are in operational roles, such as parks maintenance and refuse collection which involves manual work, driving HGV vehicles and using machinery.

Demographics of the organisation



Regular view of the demographics of the organisation is essential when considering tailored and appropriate wellbeing support.

For example, the age and gender profile of the organisation shows that the biggest group of employees is women aged between 50-59. Data shows that 77% of female employees are aged 40 or above (i.e. 43% of the total workforce), therefore it is important that health and wellbeing initiatives particularly consider the different factors that impact on the health of this group. For example, information and guidance for managers on how to support a woman going through the menopause would be helpful.

Sickness Absence summary

Days lost to sickness 2018/19 – 2021/22

	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Total days lost to sickness	4014	3990	3278	3328.5
Average days sickness per employee (all sickness)	11.2	11.3	8.88	8.92
Average days sickness per employee (short term only)	5.46	5.91	3.99	3.87
Average days sickness per employee (long term only)	5.74	5.39	4.89	5.05

As evidenced in the figures, the number of days lost to sickness has significantly reduced over recent years, which can largely be attributed to the widespread introduction of agile working at the Council, which was implemented during the Covid 19 pandemic. The ability to work from home provides an opportunity for employees to continue to work during some periods of recovery or whilst experiencing mild health issues, which would have previously resulted in an episode of absence from work.

In depth analysis of data from 1/1/2022 – 31/12/2022

During 2022, 3786 working days were lost to sickness absence.

The Council lost the most time to absence due to:

- 1) fractures or injury (507 days) *
- 2) anxiety, stress and depression (404.5 days)
- 3) Covid19 (285 days)

* Approximately 55% of these days were lost in the Environmental Services service area in which a large majority of workers undertake manual/physical roles where likelihood of injury is naturally increased.

Whilst the most frequently occurring reasons for absence were:

- Covid-19 (82 occurrences)
- Gastro-intestinal problems (54 occurrences)
- Cold, cough and flu (47 occurrences)
- Headaches (36 occurrences)

Whilst the reasons for fractures and injuries may vary, we need to ensure safe working practices are followed in the workplace to minimise those which do occur at work rather than in an employee's personal time. Please refer to the Health and Safety Policy for further information about the Council's priorities and commitments to providing a safe environment for employees.

The second largest cause of absence is anxiety, stress and depression. These conditions can be caused from personal/domestic factors, work or a combination of both. This reinforces the need for an Employee Wellbeing Strategy to support both employees' physical and mental health.

Our approach

As an employer, we intend to give higher priority to protecting the health and wellbeing of our employees by

- ensuring that employees work in a safe environment and,
- promoting a culture where they feel supported.

Equally, employees need to also recognise their own responsibility to effectively manage their own health and wellbeing.

It is important that the Council does not solely have a reactive approach when it comes to wellbeing at work. A more pro-active approach is required which promotes better health and truly supports employee wellbeing.

Aims of the Employee Wellbeing Strategy

Investing in employee wellbeing can lead to:

- Reducing costs – absence, attrition, presenteeism whilst unwell etc
- Attracting and retaining top talent
- Supporting a positive and psychologically safe culture
- Higher productivity
- Increased employee engagement (satisfaction and loyalty)
- Meeting legal and Health and Safety obligations, whilst addressing risks

We understand that wellbeing is not a “one size fits all” approach, and the support needed for one person may differ considerably for the next person. We must therefore ensure our strategy is holistic and wide reaching.

To achieve our aim, the Wellbeing Strategy will have a two-strand approach:

Firstly, it will focus on the promotion and protection of health and wellbeing - **‘Promote.’** Secondly, it will focus on providing holistic support when health is impacted in some way– **‘Provide and Protect’.**

Promote

To maximise the Council’s chance of a healthy, productive, and engaged workforce, it must act wherever possible to create an environment which promotes and protects good physical and mental health.

Physical health and working environment

Cycle to Work Scheme

The Cycle to work scheme is a salary sacrifice initiative which encourages alternative commute/travel to improve health and fitness and reduce carbon emissions and environmental impact. The initiative also allows employees to make tax and national insurance savings on the cost of a new bike and safety accessories.

Corporate Eyecare Voucher Scheme

Employees who regularly use a computer at work are entitled to a free eye test every two years. They are provided with a voucher which can be used against the cost of glasses if they are needed solely for using a computer.

Vaccinations

The Council provides free flu vaccinations on an annual basis for all front-line employees (for those who do not receive a free vaccination with the NHS). Employees are also encouraged to have Covid vaccinations to reduce the impact of Covid on themselves and their colleagues.

Health checks for over 45's

The Council would like to introduce annual health checks for this group in the future, subject to financial appraisal. It is hoped that these checks will review weight, blood pressure, cholesterol, lifestyle review, resting heart rate, personalised health advice.

Agile Working

The Council updated the Agile Working Policy in early 2023. This allows those whose roles have been determined as agile the opportunity to work from home up to twice a week (three times a week where certain criteria are met, and the arrangement agreed by the Corporate Head).

Benefits resulting from adopting an agile working approach have included improved job satisfaction and morale, reduced absenteeism due to sickness, an improved work/life balance, reduced time spent commuting. The Council's intention is that with an added degree of flexibility, employees will be better equipped to respond to and manage the demands of everyday working life alongside any temporary additional demands they may face due to external factors.

Health insurance

The Council provides both a subsidised health plan and dental plan for employees, subject to respective employment criteria.

Health promotion initiatives

The Council will develop and run a range of health promotion initiatives designed to raise awareness of health and lifestyle issues affecting physical and mental health and wellbeing.

It is likely that Occupational health professionals and the HR team will have primary responsibility for leading these initiatives, but line managers and employees will be encouraged to participate.

The initiatives could focus on some of the following topics:

- stress management
- building positive relationships
- lifestyle behaviours, (for example in relation to alcohol, drugs and smoking)
- physical activity and fitness
- menopause and women's health
- men's health
- understanding mental health
- heart related health
- nutrition
- awareness sessions on certain chronic illnesses

This list is not exhaustive and initiatives focusing on new topics could be arranged in response to specific issues.

These initiatives could be run in a wide variety of ways. They could take the form of individual training or awareness sessions, lunchtime drop-in sessions, or written information or guidance. Relevant local businesses could be invited to partner with the Council and visit different locations to run information stands, events or promotions.

Below are examples of the type of sessions or groups that the Council has or intends to introduce:

- Yoga, exercise, and relaxation sessions
- Workplace massage
- Lunchtime walking groups and team challenges
- Healthy eating and recipes – information and demonstrations
- Lunchtime table tennis

Organisational Culture

As discussed in the Council's Organisation Development Strategy (2022 – 2026), the Council aspires to be an 'employer of choice' and a place where our staff are committed, happy and 'part of our journey'.

Our approach to supporting and improving the wellbeing of our employees is key to achieving this, creating a psychological safe space where they feel valued, supported and listened to.

Policies, Procedures and Guidance

Our policies and procedures support the wellbeing of our employees when they are at work, dealing with different stages of life or absent due to ill health.

We have and will continue to develop specific policies and guidance to address health issues, raise awareness and guide our managers on how to provide relevant and appropriate support including:

- Managing sickness absence policy and guidance
- Menopause policy and guidance,
- Managing cancer in the workplace,
- Supporting an employee through a bereavement

Our employees can take advantage of excellent family-friendly work-life balance policies and scheme which include (but are not limited to):

- Flexible Working Policy
- Carers' Policy and paid time off
- Maternity & Paternity leave and enhanced pay
- Adoption, Shared Parental and Parental bereavement leave and pay

Effective Management

Within our strategies and practices our focus is on effective and supportive management.

Individual management style will vary from manager to manager, but it is expected that managers will nurture effective team working and healthy, productive relationships with employees that are based on mutual respect and trust.

The Council will continue to roll out its Management Development Programme through all levels of management. This will ensure that both new and existing managers are suitably skilled up and supported to lead and support their teams. In addition, stress management training will be provided for line managers to give them the skills they need to support their team during stressful periods.

Celebrating diversity

The Council will recognise important issues and celebrate diversity wherever possible. This will help to create a more open and inclusive environment where everyone feels welcomed and accepted, and have a positive impact on employee wellbeing.

A calendar of national awareness days, weeks and months could be created for the organisation to acknowledge and celebrate diversity – for example: Pride month, World Mental Health Day, Race Equality Week, International Women’s Day, International Men’s Health Week etc. Acknowledgement and celebration of these events would include information sharing, activities and promotions and inviting guests to speak to the organisation on certain topics.

Additionally, the Council will look to increase understanding and awareness of different cultures and traditions. Managers will be provided with guidance and information to ensure that employees are treated with respect. For example –supporting employees during Ramadan.

Disability Confident scheme

The Council is a ‘disability committed’ employer in this national scheme which supports and encourages employers to think differently about disability and take action to improve how they recruit, retain and develop disabled people. More information about this scheme will be available in the new Recruitment Policy.

Employee engagement

The Council has an employee suggestion scheme in place which enables employees to make anonymous suggestions on any part of working life. This helps to provide an employee voice and creates an opportunity to provide feedback. It is planned to run more employee surveys to gain feedback on specific topics.

Celebrating success

As discussed in the Council’s Organisational Development Strategy, it is important that employees feel cared about and valued.

In addition to the existing employee of the month scheme, consideration will be given to whether this scheme could be expanded to a Team of the Month award or multiple awards at an employee ‘Oscars’ style ceremony.

Training

The Council will continue to run in-house courses on topics which will provide managers with the skills they need to manage their team. These could include but are not limited to:

- Unconscious bias
- Emotional Intelligence
- Mental Health Awareness
- Stress awareness and management

Opportunities to attend training on key topics such as these will also be made available for all employees.

Provide and Protect

This second strand of the strategy is focused on ensuring that employees have a wide range of support when their physical or mental health is impacted.

Actively working to reduce stigma around mental health

The Council aims to create a culture where employees feel safe to have honest conversations about mental health. The Council would like employees to feel confident that sharing details of their health will not put their reputation or employment at risk.

To do this the Council will:

- expand the range of tools and resources available for managers to use to enable them to have productive and non-judgemental one to one conversations, where an employee feels safe to share changes in their mental health, particularly sharing any work related factors

Tools currently include:

- Wellness Action Plans – a document to help employees to identify what keeps them well and how their manager or colleagues can provide specific support if their mental health declines.
 - Individual Stress Risk Assessment – a risk assessment document which aims to aid in the identification of potential work pressures or demands which may be causing an individual to feel they are feeling stressed.
- provide training for both managers and employees which will increase knowledge and understanding of different mental health issues
 - Encourage openness and create opportunities for storytelling from employees who feel able to share their personal stories on their mental health challenges and journeys
 - Foster good communication in teams where employees feel able to share changes in their mental health

Mental Health First Aiders

The Council has a small group of Mental Health First Aiders. These are individuals who are trained to be a point of contact for someone who is experiencing a mental health issue or emotional distress. The support they provide could range from having an initial conversation through to supporting an employee to get appropriate help. It is the ambition of the Council to increase the number of mental health first aiders so that there is at least one per service area.

Financial Wellbeing support

It is recognised that in today's world, particularly amid a cost-of-living crisis, financial matters can significantly impact an individual's level of stress.

The Council will run financial webinars and information sessions. These will cover general advice and signposting in addition to more specific sessions e.g., retirement planning.

Departmental stress risk audits

Templates and guidance will be provided to enable managers to analyse and address situations where multiple members of a team appear to be experiencing increased levels of workplace stress.

Occupational Health

Occupational health professionals will play a critical part in developing return to work plans for employees returning after absences and provide advice and guidance on any short- or long-term adjustments to ensure that working environments are conducive to a successful return.

Free confidential counselling

Employees can have five free confidential counselling sessions each year with a choice of independent counsellors.

Signposting

The Council intends to increase the content on the staff intranet to create a portal of helpful links and resources. These pages will provide support and information for managers and individual employees to help themselves or gain external support through other organisations.

Responsibilities within the Employee Wellbeing Strategy

The Council

The organisation has a legal duty of care to employees to ensure health at work, as set out in the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. The organisation will ensure that its policies and practices reflect this duty and review the operation of these documents at regular intervals.

Human Resources

The Human Resources (HR) team work collaboratively across the organisation to provide specialist advice, guidance and support to managers.

The HR team will develop organisation-wide policies and procedures to protect the wellbeing of employees, assist line managers in supporting individuals, and liaise as appropriate with occupational health and other medical professionals, with the object of helping employees to maintain good physical and psychological health.

Line managers

Line managers will put in place measures to minimise the risks to employee wellbeing, particularly from negative pressure at work. Managers must familiarise themselves with the Health and Safety Executive's stress management standards and use these to mitigate psychological risks in their teams. For example, managers should ensure that employees understand their role within the team and receive the necessary information and support from managers and team members to do their job. Managers must also familiarise themselves with the organisation's policies and tackling inappropriate behaviour in order to support employees, for example on bullying and harassment issues.

In particular, line managers must ensure that they take steps to reduce the risks to employee health and wellbeing by:

- ensuring that the right people are recruited to the right jobs and that a good match is obtained between individuals recruited and job descriptions/specifications;
- keeping employees in the team up to date with developments at work and how these might affect their job and workload;
- ensuring that employees know who to approach with problems concerning their role and how to pursue issues with senior management;
- making sure jobs are designed fairly and that work is allocated appropriately between teams; and
- ensuring that work stations are regularly assessed to ensure that they are appropriate and fit for purpose.

Occupational Health

Occupational health professionals will provide a comprehensive service designed to help employees stay in work, or to return to work. This will include preparing medical assessments of individuals' fitness for work following referrals, liaising with GPs and working with individuals to help them to retain employment.

Employees

Employees must take responsibility for managing their own health and wellbeing, by adopting good health behaviours (for example in relation to diet, alcohol consumption and smoking) and informing the organisation if they believe work or the work environment poses a risk to their health. Any health-related information disclosed by an employee during discussions with managers, the HR service or the occupational health service is treated in confidence.

Further information

For more information, please view the 'Wellbeing advice' section of the Council's staff intranet. This section contains resources for managers, signposting to external resources, information on wellbeing initiatives. As actions are completed as part of the Employee Wellbeing Strategy Action Plan, this section will develop and grow.

[Wellbeing advice – Staff pages \(runnymede.gov.uk\)](http://runnymede.gov.uk)

For all information contained within this document contact:

Runnymede Borough Council
The Civic Centre
Station Road
Addlestone
Surrey KT15 2AH

Tel 01932 838383

email: humanresources@runnymede.gov.uk

www.runnymede.gov.uk

Further copies of this publication,
or copies in large print other
formats or languages
can be obtained via the
above contact details.



Search: Runnymede Borough Council