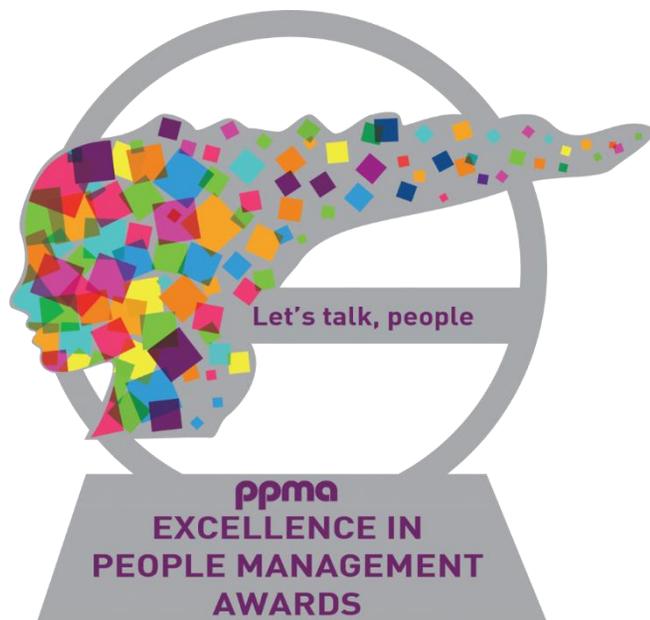




Submission Details

Organisation or individual to which this submission relates (if different from above):	
Approximate size of organisation (number of employees) if applicable:	7000
Number of employees covered by the initiative if applicable:	2,500



Introduction

Stress/mental health related absence in the councils we serve is the most common reason for absence, having overtaken musculoskeletal conditions. We recognised this was an increasing issue and knew that simply producing a new policy would not solve this, so we tackled this in a new way.

We genuinely believe that workplace wellbeing is becoming a necessity rather than 'nice to have'. We are forward thinking and recognise that it's not a 'pink and fluffy' concept, rather a prevention, intervention and engagement piece. We know that it's our duty and responsibility to keep our people safe, not just from accidents, but from stress related symptoms, which can lead to mental ill health if not addressed.

We all have mental health and according to current statistics, 1 in 4 will experience a mental health problem in a year, and 1 in 6 people in the past week will experience a common mental health problem. (Source: MIND, Mental Health Foundation).

We understand the return on investment when tackling mental health is a long term strategy, but set ourselves some short to medium term objectives, as below. Our challenge is to consistently connect with stakeholders and work with the experts in this area. Senior management buy-in was key to our success and it has taken passion and tenacity to persuade, influence and negotiate with senior leaders to support the initiatives, listen to employees and the experts, to really make a difference.

Charter framework and fully supported by our senior leadership team, with the Director of Children's Services being our Workplace Wellbeing Champion.

We believe we have improved the lives of employees through a series of campaigns, events and wellbeing initiatives with a creative and innovative approach. Our plan was driven by what our data was telling us, but also by listening to our employees through forums and feedback.

Initiatives introduced

The following initiatives and activities have been implemented within existing resources and budget and demonstrate what can be achieved through creative thinking and working in partnership with others:

1. **Mental Health First Aid Training** delivered by our Adult College:
 - 25 managers attended a 2-day course, qualifying them as Mental Health First Aiders
 - 40 staff completed a ½ day Mental Health awareness sessionWe are rolling out Mental Health First Aid council-wide with a commitment to deliver to 1 in 10 managers. (Appendices 1 and 2).
2. Working in partnership with Public Health, our network of **Health Champions** who complete the Royal Society of Public Health Level 2 Health Improvement course, including additional training on Mental Health First Aid, are scattered across the council. Their role is to listen to what is going on and signpost employees to where they can get support. Our Health Champions are staff volunteers, recruited through our Workplace Wellbeing Steering Group and our Health Champion Leads. All Health Champions wear a badge to identify themselves.
3. The **Time to Talk** campaign involved our Mental Health First Aid trainer attending team meetings to support and listen to the concerns of employees. The campaign involved posters, global email and intranet pages dedicated to signposting employees to where they could get help.
4. **National Stress Awareness Day** saw our Health Champions championing this cause with pop-up sessions across the council.
5. **Mental Health Awareness Week** – 14th–18th May 2018, delivery of:
 - Mental Resilience Seminars, including follow-up drop in sessions for 1-1's
 - 'Tea and chat' sessions lead by our Mental Health First Aid trainer
 - Stalls situated across the council including the shopping centre, lead by our Health Champions and members of HR&OD
 - Community Mental Health Nurse on site

(Appendix 3).

6. Havering adopted the **Absentia Day One** absence initiative in partnership with our occupational health provider. When employees are reporting stress, anxiety or depression they have the opportunity to be referred for counselling at a very early stage.
7. We rolled out **Line Manager training** on sickness absence management with a focus on maintaining regular communication whilst the employee is off sick, ensuring the employee has access to and are supported with what is available to them whilst they are away from the workplace and emphasising the importance of the return to work interview.
8. **Promotion of EAP** – we conduct quarterly campaigns to promote our EAP programme, ensuring that all employees receive the communication, through email or for our remote workers without access to a PC, leaflets and posters are distributed. (Appendix 4).
9. Working in partnership with our Sports Development Co-ordinator we increased our offer around physical activity, e.g.:

Yoga, Pilates, Spinning Classes, Badminton, Walk on a Wednesday.
10. Our **Staff Engagement and Wellbeing Forum** was established in 2018 to listen to our employees. Topics have included: Communication, Mindfulness Taster Session, and how to get involved in workplace wellbeing initiatives.
11. In October and November 2018, in partnership with our occupational health provider we delivered **Men's and Women's health seminars**. The seminars were supported by our Health Champions. (Appendix 5).
12. **Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT)**. 6 week, 1 hour a week programme.
13. Established a partnership with Neyber, our financial wellbeing provider, to address the connection between mental health and **financial wellbeing**.

Conclusion

Our approach has included a range of activities and in doing so, we believe we have raised organisational awareness of this sometimes 'taboo' subject. This as an essential part of what we do and have shown that we can make a difference to the lives of our employees through creative use of resources and working closely with our partners and stakeholders.