



Submission Details

Organisation or individual to which this submission relates (if different from above):	
Approximate size of organisation (number of employees) if applicable:	2,200
Number of employees covered by the initiative if applicable:	2,200

Our commitment to the health and wellbeing of our workforce is embedded in our People Strategy: **Working for Thurrock is about more than 'just a job' – we want a healthy, diverse, lively and vibrant organisation where staff feel supported, where the physical environment, nature of the job and the balance between home and work enable staff to work effectively, safely and have fun.**

Our annual health and wellbeing programme of support holds this commitment at its centre and has been shaped by our Improvement service with employees as key stakeholders, working collaboratively with HR and Occupational Health.

A unique factor about Thurrock is that over 80% of our employees are also residents of the Borough – any small measure of improvement and support we could deliver would therefore mean we were also having an impact on the health and wellbeing of our residents. Built into our Community Priorities is a commitment to 'Improve Health and Wellbeing'.

We needed to consider all of our out-lying offices and other Council teams that are not based in the Civic Offices also needed a clear plan about how we make the offer available and effectively engage staff across the organisation with it, to communicate the value it adds.

Most critical was our cost limitations – the initiatives had to be delivered on a zero budget – this was achieved through developing strong relationships with local providers to get their support and working creatively with national suppliers on initiatives that can be provided at no cost to the authority.

What we did

We consulted with our six staff networks and our corporate workforce group to understand what would make a difference – this helped us to shape an ongoing programme of support that would engage employees: Holistic Therapy, Advice & Support via an Employee Assistance Programme, Mental Health support, Financial wellbeing, Employee Health Checks, Healthy Eating and resilience.

We used data from our sickness absence management system and feedback from managers on re-occurring sickness issues to compile a range of initiatives that would help support stress related illness, as well as musculoskeletal conditions and raise awareness of healthy lifestyles.

We wanted to engage local businesses and health providers that could offer services at a reduced or nil cost to employees – making initiatives more accessible for employees to try different things and consider their own individual requirements.

Ongoing monthly themes were established with service providers of health and wellbeing support partnering with us to offer their services – taster sessions were run, free of charge for employees; promotion and support stands were established focusing on themes that employees told us would help them.

We approached local gyms and leisure centres to support our initiatives – the response was excellent with a range of discounted memberships and other offers being made available to employees.

Since 2015 a health and wellbeing week has been held annually in October and is packed full of events, offers and support for staff – this creates a buzz of activity and sets the plan for the following year of what will be included. We survey participants for their views on what will have impact for them which informs further action and the growth of the programme. In 2018 we provided 273 health and wellbeing sessions with 177 of these being bookable sessions. The bookable sessions were taken up by 2,699 individuals. The health and

wellbeing themes offered included, amongst others: health checks, fitness, holistic therapy, stress & anxiety, posture, mindfulness, meditation, financial wellbeing and information, advice and support.

By creating an annual programme this has underpinned the importance we place on our employees' health and wellbeing. Managers are encouraged to free up time for their team members to participate with all health and wellbeing events widely communicated and advertised including in the Chief Executive's blog.

Our financial wellbeing partnership with Neyber has been well received across the organisation with a large proportion of employees engaging with the offer since its introduction into the organisation, either utilizing the loans or accessing the webinars and supporting guidance/information made available to them. Our recognised Trade Unions and senior management team have both visibly supported the offer – as seen in our promotional video with them [here!](#)

Our total investment to date on the health and wellbeing programme to date is purely officer time. The only exception being our employee assistance programme which is cost effective at around £6 per employee, we have even successfully brokered this to the third sector and other authorities, creating a small income which will help us fund future initiatives that cannot be delivered at zero cost.

Our Impact

Our evaluations have shown that employees have been engaged in both the monthly themes and the annual health and wellbeing week.

Our online survey told us that 85% of staff rated the various programmes as 'excellent' or 'good'. We included an opportunity for employees to tell us what they would like to see more of and this was taken up by the majority of survey participants, with over 60% giving their ideas for further support on what would help them.

Of the employee participation sessions which were fully booked feedback with these tells us that 90% of employees rated them as 'excellent' and strongly agreed with the statement: 'This has helped me to improve my wellbeing'.

In the Managing your Wellbeing and Building Personal Resilience training sessions, 100% of respondents strongly agreed with: 'this is relevant to my role' and 'I have a clear action plan to manage my wellbeing and resilience'

In a digital world what we have overwhelmingly been told by our workforce is the powerful effects of coming together, sharing experiences and what has helped to make a difference – we have given our employees the time and space and 'permission' to consider their health and wellbeing needs while at work and they are thriving in this environment.

Our sickness absence statistics, whilst still a challenge, are starting to show the positive effect these initiatives are having and with managers taking a more proactive approach in helping support employees absences we are confident this trend will continue.

General observations from managers and Staff Networks have centered on the 'buzz' of interest and excitement from employees who eagerly anticipate 'what next'.

What next for health and wellbeing?

We are stepping up to the challenge of continuing a sustainable health and wellbeing

programme with the support of Public Health, local service providers and health organisations' – our experience over the last few years have shown that without huge budgets, but with passion and innovation, big changes and improvements can be made to benefit employee wellbeing. This is set to continue with the introduction of a musculoskeletal triage service delivered in house and partnering with an external provider for psychological assessments – two additional tools that will make a measurable, long term difference to the wellbeing of our #TeamThurrock.