

OUR HEALTH PROJECT – TIME TO CHANGE

Report of the Managing Director

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 As part of research during the Our Health Project we have identified the Time to Change Charity which is tackling mental health discrimination within the workforce.
- 1.2 This report outlines proposals to carry out a year long programme of activities which will raise awareness amongst our employees, aiming to encourage an open and supportive culture within the organisation where it's ok to talk about mental health issues.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 The Board is requested to approve Derby Homes signing up to the 'Time to Change Pledge'.
- 2.2 Board Members are requested to support this initiative and where possible engage within activities planned during 2017.
- 2.3 To approve the overall monitoring of the Time to Change action plan through the Health & Safety Forum and therefore ensure regular feedback to the Board through the Board Member Champion for Health and Safety.

3. MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 The Our Health Project has now been running for some time and reporting progress through the Health and Safety Forum. Initially working with three control groups, we are now looking to extend health initiatives to the wider workforce during 2017.
- 3.2 Time to Change was launched in 2007 with the objective of reducing mental health related stigma and discrimination. Jointly funded by the Department of Health, Comic Relief and the Big Lottery, it is run by Mind and ReThink Mental Illness.
- 3.3 Among the aims of Time to Change is to "ensure that people with mental health problems report reduced levels of discrimination in their work place....secure changes to policy, practice and organisational culture in order to reduce stigma and discrimination in the long term".
- 3.4 A key objective of Time to Change is to get people talking about mental health. Improving management skills to be able to talk to employees about mental health is an important part of the initiative.

- 3.5 To become part of this initiative employers are asked to sign a pledge to Time to Change: that pledge is:
- “We are pledging to take action to reduce mental health discrimination as part of Time to Change”.
- 3.6 Derby Homes will create an Action Plan to sit alongside the pledge, this will show the details of our plan activities and actions. The template is provided by Time to Change and employers are required to demonstrate how they will meet certain objectives. A copy of our proposed action plan is attached at Appendix 1.
- 3.7 As a high profile launch to the initiative, it is proposed that the Chair and Managing Director will introduce and sign the pledge in front of staff at employee briefings scheduled to be held on 2 February 2017, these briefings have been scheduled to coincide with the National ‘Let’s Talk Mental Health Day’.
- 3.8 The overall programme of activities and working group behind them will be led by Andrew McNeil, Head of Housing Investment. Andrew has previous experience of working in the mental health profession and his leadership will move the initiative away from being a Human Resource led project. Alongside Andrew, all Senior Management Team members will have a responsibility for Time to Change and will promote it within their own work areas.

4. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 In 2015/16 the average lost days due to sickness was 7 days per employee, this represents excellent attendance levels. However, along with most employers our top reason for working days lost was stress/anxiety and depression.
- 4.2 In 2015/16 a total of 621 working days were lost due to a mental health related illness. When a mental health related absence occurs there is a high likelihood that it will become a long term absence, the average absence period being 22 days. A total of 20 employees reported a mental health related illness, this figure represents 4% of our workforce.
- 4.3 Our data shows that managers are already very good at supporting employees returning to work following an absence for a mental health issue. In the last three months our records show that 100% of return to work interviews were completed compared to an overall organisational average of 60% for all return to work interviews. This is something that we are currently working to improve.
- 4.4 We already have a wide range of support mechanisms in place for our employees, these include:
- Employee Assistant Scheme
 - Access to medial advice from First Care
 - On Line Stress Assessment for return to work
 - Team stress risk assessments:

This initiative will compliment all of the above.

5. FINANCIAL AND BUSINESS PLAN IMPLICATIONS

This initiative is intended to raise awareness, acceptance and understanding of mental health issues. We aim to achieve positive benefits for our employees and the wider organisation. Improving health and wellbeing of our employees has wide ranging benefits and will enable us to maintain excellent levels of attendance.

6. EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

This initiative will feed into, and learning will be used to inform, our Equalities Policies and procedures that establish a culture free from harassment and discrimination and promote fairness within the workplace.

The areas listed below have no implications directly arising from this report:

Legal and Confidentiality
Council
Environmental
Risk
Health & Safety
Policy Review

If Board Members or others would like to discuss this report ahead of the meeting please contact:

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Background Information: None

Supporting Information: None