

MENTAL HEALTH TASK GROUP

17 September 2019

Present: Councillor G Saffery (Chair)
Councillors D Allen-Williamson, A Grimston, R Martins and
B Mauthoor

Officers: Democratic Services Officer (IM)

12 Apologies for absence

There were none.

13 Disclosures of interest

There were none.

14 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2019 were approved.

15 Survey results

Task group members welcomed the survey responses which had been received from seven external organisations. The responses had been extremely helpful in understanding the extent of local mental health provision and the challenges facing those groups, as well as helping to shape the task group's recommendations for future work in the council.

16 Task group recommendations

The task group reviewed the suggested draft recommendations which drew on the discussions of previous meetings and on the survey data. During discussions, task group members raised the following points:

- It was important that the Health and Wellbeing Forum (H&WBF) was able to dedicate sufficient time and resources to furthering the task group's work. There was some discussion about the possibility of Overview and Scrutiny Committee (O&S) taking up the recommendations. However it was

concluded that O&S's remit was to scrutinise the council's statutory duties. These did not include mental health provision in the borough.

- In order to maintain momentum, the H&WBF might consider establishing a separate, splinter forum dedicated to mental health issues. This could be chaired by the council's mental health champion. The purpose of the forum would be to facilitate discussions between the voluntary sector and statutory authorities, including Hertfordshire County Council. Similar arrangements had been made to great effect to progress issues such as dementia and to bring together local pensioners.
- Mental health amongst young people was a matter of particular importance to the task group. The members strongly endorsed the recommendation to invite representatives from local secondary schools to talk about how mental health issues were being tackled and how the council could help and support them in the future.
- Watford Borough Council was ahead of other authorities and businesses in its focus and work on mental health. The council had a role to play in sharing best practice and encouraging awareness and action in local businesses.
- The council might consider a commitment to the 'Where's Your Head At?' Workplace Manifesto. This called on employers and MPs to confirm their commitment to workplace wellbeing by signing up their support for a healthier working world – "where people's mental health is supported and protected and where wellbeing is at the heart of all we do". The Chair agreed to consider this question with the council's mental health champion separately from the task group.
- A requirement of the mental health champion should be that he/she attended the accredited two-day mental health first aid training course. In addition, it was desirable that mental health awareness training became a core part of all councillors' on-going training and development.

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Next steps

The task group's report and recommendations would be considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 24 October. Once approved, these would be forwarded to the Mayor and Portfolio Holder for Community.

The Chair expressed his thanks to the task group and to the Democratic Services Officer. He hoped that task group members would continue to support the council's work in this area in the future.

Chair

The Meeting started at 6.30 pm
and finished at 7.10 pm