



**WATFORD
BOROUGH
COUNCIL**

Mental Health Task Group

October 2019

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Task group members

Councillor Glen Saffery
Councillor Dawn Allen-Williamson
Councillor Amanda Grimston
Councillor Rabi Martins
Councillor Bilqees Mauthoor

Chair, Councillor for Woodside Ward
Councillor for Callowland Ward
Councillor for Meriden Ward
Councillor for Central Ward
Councillor for Leggatts Ward

Other members contributing

Councillor Jennifer Pattinson

Councillor for Meriden Ward

Officer support

Ishbel Morren
Sandra Hancock

Democratic Services Officer
Senior Democratic Services Officer

External organisations

Guideposts Trust
Watford Mencap
Mind, Hertfordshire Network
New Hope
Signpost
The Living Room
YC Hertfordshire

Proposed recommendations to present to Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1. Mental health and wellbeing should be brought under the auspices of Watford Borough Council's Health and Wellbeing Forum (H&WBF). Membership of the forum should, by default, include Watford Borough Council's Mental Health Champion.
2. A formal role profile should be agreed for Watford Borough Council's Mental Health Champion to maintain focus and direction.
3. The H&WBF should establish a meaningful measure of performance and success in tackling mental health and wellbeing amongst council staff.
4. The H&WBF should bring together organisations with an interest in mental health issues to promote sharing and best practice.
5. The H&WBF should invite representatives from local secondary schools to talk about how mental health issues are being tackled.
6. Further and ongoing training should be provided for councillors on mental health awareness to assist them in their work in the community

Background to the task group

The impact of mental ill health is significant. NHS research states that 1 in 4 people experience mental health issues each year, with 1 in 6 workers experiencing depression, anxiety or problems relating to stress at any one time. The mental health charity MIND has found that 1 in 5 people take a day off due to stress, yet 90% of these people cite a different reason for their absence.

Alongside these statistics, a report by the Royal College of Psychiatrists has concluded that “mental health is the largest single source of burden of disease in the UK. No other health condition matches mental illness in the combined extent of prevalence, persistence and breadth of impact”.

Although Watford Borough Council does not have a formal remit in this area, it is recognised that local authorities have an important role to play in promoting wellbeing and improving mental health in their communities. To this end, the council has taken a number of steps:

- Councillor Rabi Martins has been the authority’s mental health champion since 2013, tasked with promoting mental health and wellbeing within the council and in the local community.
- The council has signed the Mind and Rethink Mental Illness “Time to Change” pledge, committing the authority to help change how people think and act about mental health in the workplace and to break down barriers surrounding mental ill health which prevent people getting treatment.
- Mayor Taylor has established a Health and Wellbeing Forum (H&WBF) bringing together councillors and different agencies such as Herts Valleys Clinical Commissioning Group (HVCCG), charities, the voluntary and community sectors.
- For its staff, the council has developed a dedicated intranet hub with information on mental health issues, establishing a co-ordinating group of Mental Health Champions and training for employees including in Mental Health First Aid.

At its meeting on 21 March 2019, Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed a scrutiny suggestion from Mayor Taylor to look at current mental health provision in the borough and consider what more Watford Borough Council could do to support those living with mental health difficulties.

The Group Head of Democracy and Governance, in consultation with the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny, agreed the chair and composition of the task group.

Overview of the task group's programme of work

As an introduction to the topic, the task group invited Councillor Jennifer Pattinson to give a short presentation on the subject of mental health and the issues it poses drawing on her expertise working for the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

Based on this background, and the objectives identified by the Mayor in his scrutiny proposal, the task group agreed the following actions:

1. Undertake a review of organisations dealing with mental health issues in the borough to understand the extent of current provision and identify any gaps;
2. Carry out a basic survey of these organisations to provide an overview of their roles and activities, identify any areas not covered and seek feedback on best practice that could be adopted; and
3. Understand the role of the council's Mental Health Champion and how he/she interacts with other mental health champions across Hertfordshire.

The task group met on three occasions. Additional research work was carried out by the Democratic Services Officer to inform the task group's work and to produce this report.

A full list of the organisations which provided evidence to the task group is listed on page 3.

The survey results are summarised in appendix A.

Recommendations and comments

1. **Mental health and wellbeing should be brought under the auspices of Watford Borough Council's Health and Wellbeing Forum (H&WBF). Membership of the forum should, by default, include Watford Borough Council's Mental Health Champion.**

The task group believes that it is important to consider mental health and wellbeing together. The H&WBF's role should be strategic i.e., to facilitate discussion, share best practice, forge links and promote dialogue between stakeholders. It should also provide a platform to promote successes and exemplary conduct. Over time, the H&WBF should continue to shape, assess and refine the council's performance on mental health and wellbeing issues.

2. A formal role profile should be agreed for Watford Borough Council's Mental Health Champion to maintain focus and direction.

The Mental Health Champion has an important role to play promoting and driving the mental health agenda in Watford, developing links with local businesses, schools and charities, and providing a conduit between these organisations and the council to share and learn best practice. Interaction with other mental health champions across Hertfordshire is also key to assist effective mental health provision for residents.

Since appointing Councillor Martins the council's first Mental Health Champion in 2013, progress has been made to define the role and to set objectives:

1. To promote and drive the mental health and wellbeing agenda within the council through the Mayor, Portfolio Holders and strategic leadership team.
2. To engage with and support voluntary sector groups providing mental health support in the community e.g., Guideposts, Signpost and New Hope.
3. To encourage local businesses to adopt mental health friendly policies.
4. To learn and share best practice with other authorities, particularly across Hertfordshire.

The task group considers that the role and objectives need to be formalised to maintain focus and direction.

It is suggested that the Mental Health Champion should be appointed for a period of four years. This term could be renewed. In addition to receiving dedicated officer support (currently provided by the Community and Environmental Services directorate), consideration should be given to attaching a small budget to the role.

The Mental Health Champion might also work with other members to support initiatives for particular interest groups e.g., the elderly, ethnic groups or council employees.

The task group recommends that the Mental Health Champion should complete an accredited mental health first aid training course to develop a deeper understanding of how to identify people suffering from a variety of mental health conditions, such as depression anxiety disorders, and to identify the discrimination surrounding mental health problems.

In the task group's survey, external organisations suggested that the council might also appoint a LGBTQ+ champion. This proposal should be considered by the H&WBF.

3. The H&WBF should establish a meaningful measure of performance and success in tackling mental health and wellbeing amongst council staff.

It is important that the council is able to review systematically its success in tackling mental health and wellbeing amongst council staff over time. A new measure should be devised, and monitored regularly, by the H&WBF. This might take the form of analysing how many sickness days are due to stress/mental health.

4. The H&WBF should bring together organisations with an interest in mental health issues to promote sharing and best practice.

The H&WBF has a role to play in bringing together relevant organisations in an internal forum or alliance to discuss common issues and approaches. This could be chaired by the Mental Health Champion as part of his commitment to engage with and support voluntary sector groups providing mental health support in the community e.g., Guideposts, Signpost and New Hope.

The forum or alliance would provide a means of progressing the recommendations from organisations which responded to the task group's survey. It would also provide a means of sharing and learning best practice.

In addition, survey respondents suggested the council might advertise and promote the various organisations' services and provide speakers to attend their meetings.

5. The H&WBF should invite representatives from local secondary schools to talk about how mental health issues are being tackled.

The task group recognises that there is a wealth of activity in local schools to support students and young people with their mental health. It is suggested that the H&WBF should invite representatives from a range of schools to present on this and to investigate how the council could help and support them in the future.

6. Further and ongoing training should be provided for councillors on mental health awareness to assist them in their work in the community.

Training was provided for councillors in October 2017, but this should be updated and developed over time. The task group notes that additional mental health training is scheduled to take place on 18 November 2019.

In addition, external organisations have suggested that the council should encourage the wider adoption of safeguarding training in local companies – and in the council – to help them to identify when someone is troubled and to encourage wellbeing in the workplace.

In the task group's survey, it was suggested that additional training for officers might include Psychologically Informed Environments (PIE) and Trauma Informed Care training – adapting services to become more PIE in the way they are designed and in the way officers interact with service users.

A further suggestion from the survey was that people with mental health issues could be allowed to volunteer for short periods of time at the council to gain work experience.

Bibliography/background papers

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/Health-in-Herts/health-in-herts.aspx>

https://www.who.int/mental_health/action_plan_2013/mhap_brochure.pdf?ua=1

<http://www.mentalhealthchallenge.org.uk/>

Mental Health Taskforce NE, The Five Year Forward View for Mental Health, NHS England, 2016

No health without public mental health, Royal College of Psychiatrists Position statement, PS4/2010

Work is biggest cause of stress in people's lives, MIND, 2013

Mental Health Task Group
Short Survey – summary of responses

7 organisations responded to the survey:

1. Signpost
2. The Living Room
3. YC Hertfordshire
4. Hertfordshire Mind Network
5. Guideposts Trust
6. New Hope
7. Watford Mencap

Of these, 71.43% were affiliated to a national/county-wide organisation or one with branches outside Watford. 28.57% were not.

Organisations outlined their main purpose:

Signpost	To provide mental health counselling for young people between the ages of 11 and 25 years of age who live in Hertfordshire. Counselling sessions are 1:1 and last up to 12 weekly one hour sessions and for longer dependent on need. Mental issues range from anxiety, self-harm suicidal attempts/thoughts, abuse (domestics, physical, emotional and sexual) as well as gender identity and gender issues.
The Living Room	To help people living in Hertfordshire to become (and remain) abstinent from their addiction to drugs, alcohol or addictive behaviours.
YC Hertfordshire	To provide youth work projects and programmes, information, advice, guidance, work related learning, outdoor education and support for young people aged 11-19 (to 24 for young people with learning disabilities). For young people leaving care, support is provided to the age of 21. YC Hertfordshire is part of Hertfordshire County Council. Its Personal Advisers and Youth Workers are professionally trained to provide the highest level of support and work closely with partners to provide counselling, mentoring or access to other services.

Hertfordshire Mind Network	To deliver essential mental health support in Hertfordshire, providing a diverse range of services from our seven Wellbeing Centres and other venues across all ten districts of the county. Funded locally, our services are available to all residents in Hertfordshire over the age of 18 and we offer dedicated services for 15-18 year olds. Our aim is to create opportunities for individuals experiencing mental ill health to make choices, find their solutions, build resilience and manage their whole life and wellbeing. All our services are based on the principle of self-help with a strong emphasis on prevention, personal development, self-management and improving health and wellbeing. We work with people, providing opportunities for individuals to access support to enable them to recover from or live with mental ill health.
Guideposts Trust	To provide a supportive, safe space for people with mental health issues to improve their mental wellbeing, reduce social isolation and provide a purpose in life. We provide a range of group activities, skill based training, and one-to-one support.
New Hope	To serve individuals who are homeless or vulnerably-housed in the local area through the provision of accommodation and opportunities to transform lives.
Watford Mencap	To support people with lifelong learning disabilities such as autism and Down's syndrome to reach their full potential. We also support their carers and family members

Organisations outlined their main strengths:

Signpost	Our main strength is early intervention preventing crisis for children who are younger than 13 years of age and do not qualify for CAMHS. Thus averting or preventing a crisis. Signpost also provides emergency support while a young person is waiting for services or on other waiting lists. For example the gender clinic waiting list is 12 months. Signpost is able to help at unbelievably difficult times. In addition, CAMHS (which Signpost is contracted to deliver) finishes after 12 weeks. Signpost is able to give long term counselling if required.
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The Living Room	Our core values: We are caring to clients and each other. We are customer focused when prioritising our work and activities. We support and serve our community. We ensure we are competent in performing our duties. We value our integrity as professionals.
YC Hertfordshire	YC Hertfordshire has a wide range of youth work projects across the county in which young people are encouraged to get involved. Through these projects they meet new people, learn new skills and take part in challenging opportunities. They are encouraged to develop their personal and social skills by taking part in activities including sports, drama, dance, music, workshops, outdoor education, DofE, forums, residentials and volunteering. YC Hertfordshire can help young people with the issues which are important to them such as jobs, careers and education, relationships, sexual health, confidence, self-esteem, substance misuse, staying safe, housing and independent living skills.
Hertfordshire Mind Network	We offer a diverse range of services, from 1-1 support, to groups, outreach services, wellbeing and educational courses as well as a counselling service. We pride ourselves that the majority of our staff have their own lived in experience.
Guideposts Trust	We have good links with CMHT. We provide support for people who have long-term more complex mental health issues. The clients support each other a lot. We also involve the clients a lot in decision making to ensure they have a say in how projects develop. We also have clients who run their own groups to develop new skills and confidence.
New Hope	It is the way New Hope engages with and supports those who are homeless or vulnerably housed who can present with multiple needs (e.g. mental health, physical health, no recourse to public funds (NRPF) and substance misuse). It is also the partnership work with Watford Borough Council, CGL, HYH, YMCA, CAB, Meadowell and Watford job centre.
Watford Mencap	We are innovative and willing to try new ways of working. We also provide a wide range of services from after-school clubs and LEGO clubs through to residential care. We have something for everyone aged 0 – 99.

The main challenges identified by organisations were:

- Securing adequate funding and resources for their activities in an increasingly business like charity sector
- Attracting and recruiting qualified volunteers
- Maintaining the levels of support required for people with mental health issues
- Working with a range of organisations to address complex needs including mental health issues
- Overcoming social stigmas.

Between them, these organisations cater for all age groups in the local community. All allow for self-referral with other arrangements also in place, particularly for under-18s.

Organisations have assisted between 200 and 1,500 people each over the past 12 months, with half of respondents stating that this was more than the previous 12 month period.

Just over half had heard of Watford Borough Council's mental health champion.

Apart from funding, the following forms of assistance were suggested from the council:

- advertising and promoting the groups' services
- helping to make contact with other agencies and charities in the area that might work with clients who have issues around addiction
- providing guest speakers to groups.

Other best practice suggestions included:

- encouraging safeguarding training to help identify when a young person is anxious or troubled in companies – as well as adopting it in WBC – to help mental health well-being in the workplace
- work holistically – work on the root cause of the problem and do not just deal with the symptoms. Be accessible to as wide-a-section of the community as possible - consider a crèche to allow single parents easy access
- adopt an LGBTQ+ champion

- allow people with mental health issues to volunteer for short periods of time at the council to gain work experience
- consider Psychologically Informed Environments (PIE) and Trauma Informed Care training – adapting services to become more PIE, in the way they are designed and in the way officers interact with service users.

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