Staff Health & Wellbeing: The Moray Council & NHS Grampian

In 2015 The Moray Council Environmental Protection Section set out to improve the overall health & wellbeing of staff through a Wellbeing Programme. The Council embarked on this programme to help support staff in maintaining their health and wellbeing by offering free access to wellbeing checks. The reasons for doing this were in response to:
- staff were often reluctant to visit their GP
- an ageing workforce
- high levels of staff absence due to illness
- a health at work policy that focussed primarily on office workers rather than frontline staff

From July to December wellbeing checks were offered systematically to all frontline and office-based staff in the Waste Management and Roads Sections of the Council. Each employee taking part had the opportunity to have dedicated time during their working day to discuss and check their health with an NHS Grampian healthcare professional.

Key findings
- From July to December 2015 over 100 staff participated in the well-being checks
- Employees taking part were predominantly male
- Being overweight was the most recorded issue
- Other common issues were lack of exercise, high blood pressure, smoking and mental well-being issues
- Over 74% of staff taking part intend to follow up suggestions provided during the campaign
- Following this campaign with the Waste and Roads Sections, The Moray Council has since rolled out the programme to other sections in Environmental Services
- NHS Grampian now intend to share learning & experience at a Community Partnership level

Figure 1. Key findings from Wellbeing Programme
Workplace ill-health

An HSE report from 2015\(^1\) that showed the economic costs associated with ill health are around £9.4 billion a year, equivalent to 23.3 million lost days. By industrial sector, the resource management industry has the third highest rate of ill health.

In response to the report, the HSE recently launched a five-year strategy ‘Helping Great Britain work well’. This strategy aims to improve risk management for the wellbeing of workers, and includes tackling the costs of work-related ill health.

The six themes were:
• Promoting broader ownership of health and safety
• Highlighting and tackling the costs of work-related ill health
• Simplifying risk management and helping business to grow
• Giving SMEs simple advice so they know what they have to do
• Anticipating and tackling new health and safety challenges
• Promoting the benefits of Great Britain's world-class health and safety system.

More details of the strategy are available [here](http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/overall/hssh1415.pdf) or you can follow the conversation on social media #HelpGBWorkWell.

What were the benefits?

It was hoped that the benefits of the programme to employers, employees and NHS Grampian would be;

For employers
• Reduced sickness absence
• Decreased rates of illness
• Enhanced corporate image
• Improved morale
• Improved recruitment and retention of staff
• Creation of a health culture

For employees
• Increased wellbeing and self-esteem
• Improved coping skills e.g. with stress
• Improved overall health
• Increased access to health resources/social support
• Improved job satisfaction
• Safer, more supportive work environment

For NHS Grampian
• Over time, reduced levels of preventable ill health
• Improved management of existing health conditions
• Improved use of local health services
• A healthier workforce leading to a stronger, more positive society
• Reduced health inequalities
• Creation of a positive societal health culture

“The wellbeing check provides a trigger for employees to take time to focus on their own concerns and take advantage of free advice and support. A healthier workforce is a more productive, happier workforce! Most employers, if not all, wish for one, and most employees wish to be part of that.”

Dorothy Ross-Archer, Keep Well Programme Manager
NHS Grampian

Figure 2. NHS Mobile Information Bus

Running the campaign

The Moray Council initiated this campaign for their frontline staff to try and improve the Council's health and safety culture. The Council also recognised that it was not just physical safety, but staff wellbeing overall that needed to be addressed.

Each participant completed a wellbeing check assessment with an NHS healthcare professional, focusing on the following topics.

- Caring responsibilities
- Literacy level
- Weight and healthy eating
- Smoking and alcohol consumption
- Employment and Money concerns
- Physical activity
- Mental health
- General wellbeing

After some initial scepticism from staff, a high uptake of appointments was seen, with the vast majority of those taking part saying they intend to follow up on suggestions and advice received during their sessions.

Participant feedback

“I was long overdue a ‘male M.O.T.’. After my health check I made an appointment with a health care assistant the next day to have my blood pressure checked again and subsequently saw my GP. I didn’t want my family to have to ask, ‘will Grandpa still be here to look after the grandchildren?’”

John McGee, Roads Agent, The Moray Council

“It was a reminder that although we all know about 5-a-day and the benefits of exercise, we should all do more and keep healthy as we grow older.”

R Paterson, General Forman, The Moray Council

We realised that promoting an ethos of Health & Safety went beyond the bounds of what would previously have been expected, and that we had to ensure that we were all aware of our own health wellbeing on the journey to a holistic Health & Safety culture.

Steve Williamson, Waste Management Officer
The Moray Council
Recruiting participants

Recruitment was done proactively either via a management invitation or a self booked appointment. In both instances staff were encouraged to take part and were informed that the wellbeing checks were completely confidential.

In addition, information was disseminated across the departmental sections and to individual teams using a variety of methods, including:

- Face-to-face at meetings/ briefing sessions held at council depots
- Posters pinned up on depot noticeboards (with a dyslexia friendly font)
- Section newsletters
- Emails to office-based staff

Although there was an initial reluctance amongst some staff, word of mouth was an important motivator; as key members of staff attended a session, it encouraged others to participate.

“I advised my staff about the health checks that were going to be put in place. There was a bit of confusion initially but once people started to go and started talking about it, momentum grew.”

Mike Neary, Waste Monitoring Assistant, The Moray Council

Final summary

The Moray Council initiated this campaign for their frontline staff to improve their health and safety culture. The Council also recognised that it was not just safety, but staff wellbeing overall that needed to be addressed.

After some initial scepticism from staff, a high uptake of appointments was seen, with the vast majority of those taking part saying they intend to follow up on suggestions and advice received during their sessions. Feedback showed that staff would like to see the wellbeing checks repeated on a regular basis.

A range of changes were identified, with commonalities seen across the board. Around 70% of participants intend to make changes straightaway, with the top three areas being to improve eating habits, stop smoking and to exercise more.

Key factors in making The Moray Council’s Health and Wellbeing programme successful were:

- Strong collaborative working with NHS Grampian
- Accessible to all staff
- Positive staff member at the Council to drive the programme forwards
- Management buy-in
- Wellbeing checks being delivered in-person by qualified NHS healthcare professionals
- Appointment findings were confidential

The approach was holistic. For example, a wide range of related topics were considered during the appointments including debt management, mental wellbeing issues, stress management, literacy issues, addictions and substance misuse. The Moray Council employees were then signposted to additional services or support.

Laura Sutherland, Advanced Public Health Co-ordinator NHS Grampian

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Zero Waste Scotland exists to create a society where resources are valued and nothing is wasted. Our goal is to help Scotland realise the economic, environmental and social benefits of making best use of the world’s limited natural resources. We are funded to support delivery of the Scottish Government’s circular economy strategy and the EU’s 2020 growth strategy.

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