

Report to Council

Subject: Local Government Mental Health Challenge

Date: 16 September 2020

Author: Service Manager Community Relations

Purpose

To provide a progress update on the Council's work to meet the Local Government Mental Health Challenge.

Recommendation(s)

THAT:

- 1) **Council notes the content of this update on progress against the Local Authorities' Mental Health Challenge.**

1 Background

1.1 On 20 April 2016 Council resolved to make the following commitments which are defined in the Local Authorities' Mental Health Challenge:

- sign up to the Local Authorities' Mental Health Challenge.
- commit to appoint an elected member as 'mental health champion' across the council.
- seek to identify a member of staff within the council to act as 'lead officer' for mental health.
- support positive mental health in our community, including in local schools, neighbourhoods and workplaces.
- work to reduce inequalities in mental health in our community.
- work with local partners to offer effective support for people with mental health needs.

- tackle discrimination on the grounds of mental health in our community.
- proactively listen to people of all ages and backgrounds about what they need for better mental health.

At that meeting Council also resolved to:

- review the Council's progress with regards to meeting 'The Challenge' which will include a report to Council every six months.

1.2 This report provides the latest update to Council on progress in meeting the Mental Health Challenge. It should be noted that the six monthly progress reporting to Council has not happened to date. Nonetheless, since the original motion was passed, addressing social isolation and loneliness, health inequalities in the community and supporting employees with their health and wellbeing have become priorities embedded in the Gedling Plan. Progress against these priorities have been reported quarterly to Cabinet and Scrutiny as part of the Gedling Plan performance monitoring processes, most notably as part of the quarterly achievements report. This information is also made available on the Council's website on the "How we're doing" page - <https://www.gedling.gov.uk/council/aboutus/prioritiesplansandperformance/howweredoing/> and a hard copy of performance reporting is placed in the Members' Room every quarter.

1.3 In addition, Cabinet has considered and adopted the Health and Wellbeing Delivery Plan on 6 September 2018 which included the reporting of mental health and wellbeing case studies and future commitments within an action plan. On 7 November 2019 Cabinet also agreed a commitment to increase the focus on the prevention of mental health problems and the promotion of good mental health, by signing up to the Prevention Concordat for Better Mental Health. This reported the proposed action plan for taking this additional commitment forward.

1.4 Progress regarding mental health and wellbeing programmes is also reported through monthly Portfolio Holder meetings where relevant. Many programmes cross over the portfolios of Housing, Health and Wellbeing, Community Development and Young People and Equalities.

Mental Health Champion

1.5 In 2016 Cllr Alex Scroggie was appointed to the voluntary role of Mental Health Champion. Cllr Scroggie has supported many local community mental health initiatives, including fundraising for the Arnold Methodist Church Mental Health Befriending Project. Cllr Henry Wheeler, as portfolio holder for Housing, Health and Wellbeing has also performed a role to champion action for those needing mental health and wellbeing support.

Lead Officer

- 1.6 The Service Manager Community Relations has been acting as the lead officer for delivery of mental health initiatives directed by priorities embedded in the Gedling Plan.

On-going Mental Health Support and Initiatives

- 1.7 Since 2016, the Council has continued to support and develop new work programmes to promote positive mental well-being in both the workplace and the community. Initiatives have included support for the Arnold Methodist Church Mental Health Befriending Project, an annual grant agreement with WeRHere counselling service, developing sustainable social prescribing schemes for local older people and establishing the Employee Assistance programme for staff which offers free, confidential and independent support to help achieve a greater work/life balance.

Appendix A provides an overview of mental health and wellbeing initiatives the Council has supported and coordinated.

Prevention Concordat for Better Mental Health

- 1.8 In November 2019, Cabinet agreed to make a commitment to increase the focus on the prevention of mental health problems and the promotion of good mental health within Gedling Borough, by signing up to the Prevention Concordat for Better Mental Health. In January 2020, the Council's submission was approved by Public Health England and the Chief Executive signed the Prevention Concordat on behalf of the Council. The Concordat Action Plan was presented to the Gedling Health and Wellbeing Partnership in January 2020 and partners agreed to work together on addressing this and identifying new actions as need emerges.

Covid-19 Pandemic

- 1.9 Following the Covid-19 outbreak and subsequent lockdown and Government restrictions, the Council has continued to commit its support for both staff and residents during this challenging period. As part of the emergency response the Council established its Giving for Gedling team encompassing officers from across service areas to establish the Richard Herrod Giving for Gedling Hub and reached out to local vulnerable people by facilitating their requests for need. Dedicated staff members have been in contact with close to 2000 local people needing support, many of these identifying the challenges they were facing regarding their mental health. Support offered has included food parcel deliveries, but also signposting to a range of wellbeing services offered locally, including promoting dedicated helplines relating to domestic abuse and mental health.
- 1.10 Comprehensive guidance has been established for employees during the pandemic that has included advice on wellbeing, working arrangements and tips for working at home. This has included supporting staff while their children have been unable

to attend school with many colleagues working flexible early morning and evening hours to enable childcare arrangements. As part of the community response, the Council has supported spontaneous volunteering groups that have been reaching out to vulnerable residents and also supported the establishment of a Volunteer Befriending Service for the South Nottinghamshire area that has been offering its service to Gedling residents.

- 1.11 It should be noted that many of the community support groups have had to cease meetings during the Covid-19 pandemic, mainly due to Government restrictions on gatherings and social distancing, but also following shielding advice for vulnerable groups. Many of these groups are yet to return, therefore posing a growing issue for the mental health support for some of our more vulnerable and older residents. The Council's Reset Strategy has identified actions to understand this growing problem and commitments to address these, working alongside health and social care partners and local voluntary sector.

2 Proposal

- 2.1 It is proposed that Council notes the content of this update on progress against the Local Authorities' Mental Health Challenge.

3 Alternative Options

- 3.1 Not to report progress on meeting the Mental Health Challenge to Council, however the original motion resolves to review and report progress in this manner.

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are no financial implications.

5 Legal Implications

- 5.1 In signing up to the Local Government Mental Health Challenge, the Council has demonstrated its commitment to the actions listed in paragraph 1.1 above. Council approved regular reporting back to Council on progress. By signing up to the Challenge there is an expectation that work in relation to that commitment will be undertaken and that the Council will have regard to this commitment when delivering services and planning policy making. Reports to Council every six months in accordance with the original motion should continue, in addition to the separate reports to the Executive.

6 Equalities Implications

- 6.1 By signing up to the Local Government Mental Health Challenge, the Council is committed to making a positive impact for protected characteristics as defined by the Equalities Act.

- Age: supporting older and young people in the communities through community initiatives such as WeRHere, SPRING social prescribing schemes and Express Yourself arts and wellbeing programme.
- Gender: a balance of support offered to both males and females suffering mental health problems through social prescribing, community befriending projects and WeRHere counselling services.
- Disability: certain initiatives have a positive wellbeing impact for those with a disability, such as accessible leisure centre facilities, Citizen Advice outreach, sessions at community centres, the Hospital to Homes project and also the targeted support for Vulnerable People during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Race and ethnicity: The Council has provided dedicated support for the Caribbean and Asian Elders groups to address social isolation within these communities.
- Other Groups: Citizen Advice Outreach and the Covid-19 response are examples where additional support has been offered to enable positive mental wellbeing for other groups according to their deprivation, income and health conditions.

7 Carbon Reduction/Environmental Sustainability Implications

7.1 There are no carbon reduction or environmental sustainability implications.

8 Appendices

8.1 Appendix A: Gedling Borough Council Mental Health Projects

9 Background Papers

9.1 None.

Statutory Officer approval

Approved by: Tina Adams

Date: 07/09/20

On behalf of the Chief Financial Officer

Approved by: Francesca Whyley

Date: 04/09/20

On behalf of the Monitoring Officer