

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Employment & Appeals Committee

DATE: 8th June 2011

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WARD(S): All

PART I **DECISION**

1 Purpose of Report

To update members of the Employment & Appeals committee on the new arrangements for provision of employee assistance and counselling support to staff

2 Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action

- Members to note the changes made in how this service is delivered
- Members to request an annual report to help determine the effectiveness of the new service. Report to cover usage, feedback from staff where available and any other issues.

3 Community Strategy Priorities

Staff remain the council's most important asset, a stable and motivated workforce is critical to achieving all of the community strategy priorities.

- Celebrating Diversity, Enabling inclusion
- Adding years to Life and Life to years
- Being Safe, Feeling Safe
- A Cleaner, Greener place to live, Work and Play
- Prosperity for All

4 Other Implications

(a) Financial

In common with other Council support services, Human Resources have made 20% efficiency savings over the last 12 months. As part of the councils planning for the future exercise both of the part time employee counsellors requested voluntary redundancy. This has enabled the council to consider more cost effective approaches to providing this vital support service to its staff. The annual subscription for the employee assistance telephone and counselling support is approximately £15k - 20k this compares to a total cost of the two part time employee counsellors of £48,000.

(b) Risk Management

None

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

None

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

As part of the contract management arrangements with the supplier of the 24 helpline and counselling support, statistics on usage of the service area are provided. Once sufficient volume has been achieved the HR Business partners who monitor the contract will be analysing this usage figures to determine if any groups of staff are underrepresented.

(e) Workforce

This report covers the workforce implications of these changes. Changes to the arrangements for staff support have been communicated to staff through the council's grapevine newsletters, all user email and information attached to every staff member's payslip at the start of the contract in April. A web page has also been set up on SBCInsite providing full contact details, information on the services provided and a link to their website.

5 **Supporting Information**

The council has entered into a contract with PPC Worldwide for the provision of an Employee assistance programme. The service is split into two elements a 24 Hour, 365 days helpline and a counselling service. The 24 hour helpline deals with a range of personal and work-related issues including;

- Counselling over the telephone for issues such as relationship problems, coping with change, managing stress and pressure and bereavement
- Legal advice
- Budgeting and debt management assistance
- UK Citizens' Advice services e.g. consumer issues
- Manager consultation service.

The service is available to all council employees and is accessed by employees' at work or home through a dedicated helpline and website using a unique Slough Employee login.

The counselling service is initially offered over the telephone, where an assessment or triage is undertaken to determine if the employee would benefit from more in-depth face to face counselling. The counselling supplied by the new service is based on a solution focused approach, enabling employees to regain or maintain control of their lives. All face to face counselling appointments take place within a 30 mile radius of the employee's home and are conducted by appropriately qualified counsellors who are all members of the British Association for counselling & Psychotherapy (BACP).

6 **Comments of Other Committees**

None

7 **Conclusion**

The new arrangements for Employee Assistance will provide a number of benefits for employees over the previous service provided by the in-house Employee Counsellors. These are:-

- A more accessible service for staff members within a cost base that is more in tune with contemporary employee support, used by other organisations in the Public and Commercial sector.
- The staff will be able to access the service anytime they wish, not just during working hours.
- If employees are concerned about confidentiality by discussing their issues with someone in the office, they can be assured this service is totally of site and provided by a totally independent service from the Council.
- Staff will also have immediate access to experts in the legal and financial fields rather than having to wait to be referred to the appropriate body, which sometimes may have incurred them an extra cost.
- The EAP provider also provides access to all employees to their Health & Wellbeing website, which is also updated regular with any key issues of the month, e.g. they recently had articles, advice columns on Stress Management for Stress Awareness week.
- Those staff on long term sick will have the ability to access face to face counselling closer to home.

8 **Appendices Attached**

Information and Publicity for Staff on the Employee Assistance Programme



PPC. Providers of your EAP and Experts at Making Life Easier.

No matter when and how often you need help or information, the EAP is here to help.

Slough Borough Council is committed to providing a safe and healthy work environment for our employees; an environment in which employees feel supported and motivated to work to the best of their ability. Yet, like most organisations in the UK today, we have to flex and change to meet today's economic and social challenges. Change presents us all with challenges and opportunities. Some of us may view the possibilities created by change as exciting and stimulating, whilst others may be quite daunted, even wary of what the future may hold.

It's at times like this that we could all do with some extra support. For this reason Slough Borough Council are introducing the Employee Assistance Programme, (EAP), provided by PPC, to help make life easier for all our employees. The EAP, is core to our commitment of support to our employees at this time and beyond; it is available free of charge 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

We all benefit from good advice, help and support at various stages throughout our lives. The EAP is a confidential, professional and impartial service which provides expert advice, invaluable information, specialist counselling and support at any time, day or night., either over the telephone or on line.

The EAP will help you prepare for, and cope successfully with life's events - the things that could, potentially, cause you to become distracted, anxious and increase your stress levels. Such as:

- * Changes at Work
- * Relationships
- * Having Children
- * Returning to Work
- * Retirement Issues
- * Moving Location
- * Staying Healthy
- * Managing Money
- * Responsibilities at Work

Many of these key events are an inevitable part of everyday life. PPC are experts at identifying them, planning for them, and knowing how to deal with them, helping you to stay happy, healthy, and fully focused on life and work.

And helping in times of crisis.

Some events are less easy to predict, such as a bereavement or serious illness. PPC is available to provide expert, practical assistance and fully trained emotional support to help you through these difficult times.

The right help at the right time.

We're available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, online or on the phone. We aim to answer your questions immediately, or refer you to the most appropriate advisor, counsellor, or source of information, including legal, financial, consumer and personal - all completely confidentially.

Call **0800 282 193** any time

or visit www.ppconline.info username: **slough** password: **council**